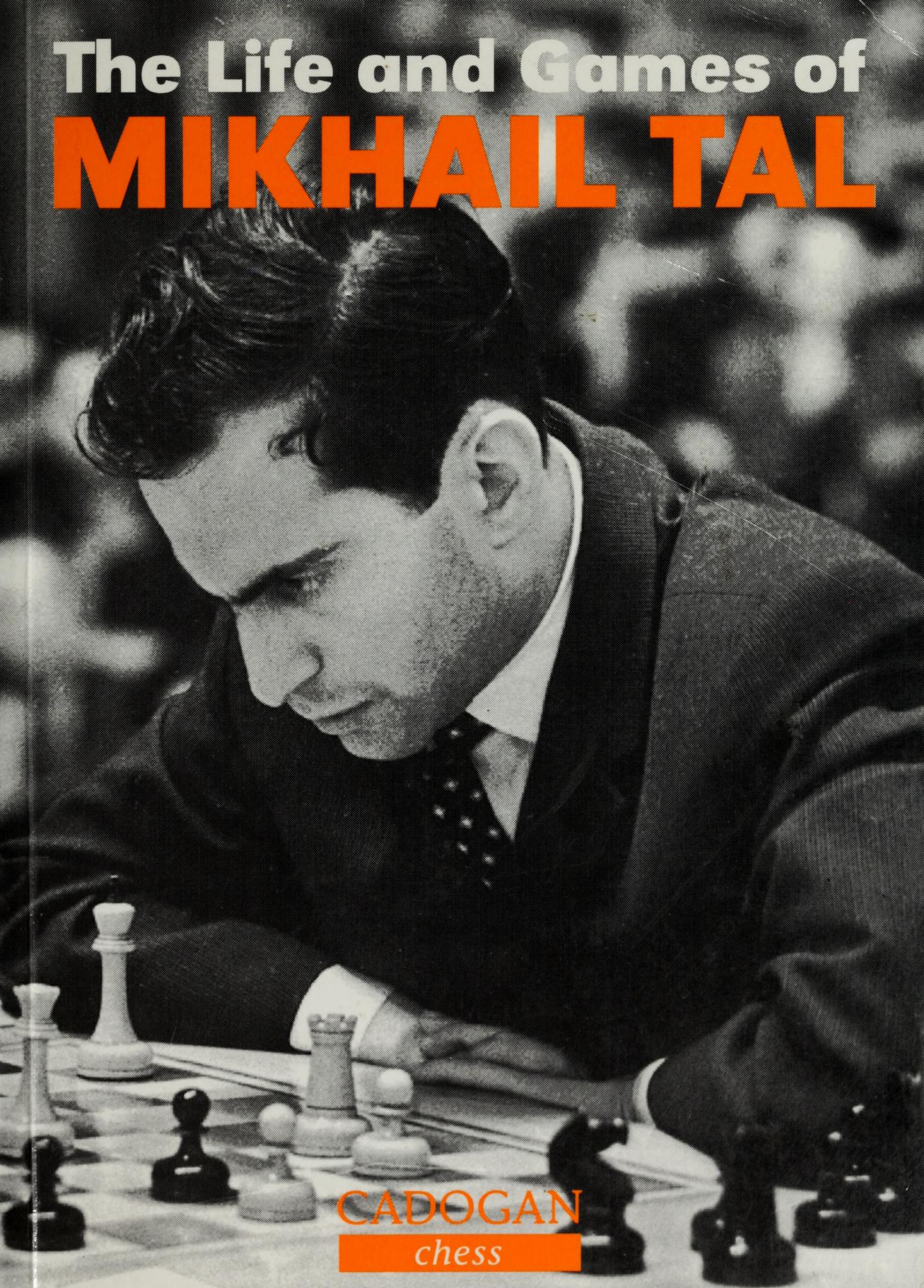
# The Life and Games of MIKHAIL TAL



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# The Life and Games of

# Mikhail Tal

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# The Life and Games of

# Mikhail Tal

Mikhail Tal

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*chess*
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# Editor's Foreword

Mikhail Tal was a remarkable man. His brilliant successes in the years leading up to his World Championship victory excited the chess world; his very name became synonymous with brilliance and attacking flair.

'Misha' had a warm and engaging personality without a hint of malice. His enthusiasm for the game he loved was unquenchable. In his later years he was afflicted by severe health problems which would have crushed a lesser man, but he never complained about his difficulties and continued to play chess right up to his death. Misha hated to postpone a game; even if he had to slip out of his doctors' grasp, he would try to make it somehow. Despite his fragile appearance, his attacking powers and astonishingly quick sight of the board remained intact.

My last visit to him was in May 1992, just after he had returned from Barcelona, his last major tournament. He 'showed' me his fine win against Lautier, but was so weak that he had to lie on his back and dictate the moves and analysis 'blindfold' to me, while I played them over on a board. He died on 28th June 1992, and the chess world is a much poorer place for his absence.

I was delighted to be asked by Cadogan Books to work on a new edition of his classic book *The Life and Games of Mikhail Tal*, which covers his career up to 1975. This is one of those rare chess books which is not only splendidly instructive, but also conveys a real impression of the author's personality.

There was relatively little for me to do apart from convert the moves to algebraic notation. I corrected some obvious misprints and errors (the incorrect diagram for the game fragment on page 61 and the missed mate in one in the analysis of game 90 are typical examples). In some cases there were errors caused by misprints, for instance the accidental omission of moves. I have corrected these without comment (just as an example, I have mentioned one as a footnote on page 150). Likewise, in about 20 academic cases, I have tidied up the end of a variation. I do not doubt that Tal would have agreed to these changes had he still been alive to go over the proofs. If there was any doubt about the analysis, or if the change was in any way significant, my remark appears as a footnote.

To avoid confusion, I should explain that footnotes which are marked 'Editor's note' and 'Translator's note' are transcribed from the RHM edition. The unattributed footnotes are mine and appear for the first time in this edition.

*John Nunn*
Chertsey, June 1997

# Acknowledgements

The chess world owes Cadogan Books plc a debt of gratitude for undertaking the monumental task of bringing this classic work by Mikhail Tal back into print. Since being first published in 1976 by RHM, and never reprinted due to the subsequent collapse of the publisher, a whole generation has grown up who have never even seen a copy. Yet *The Life and Games of Mikhail Tal* is quite probably the greatest chess book ever written. I am sure that everybody involved in the initial edition will be delighted that Tal's masterpiece is once again available to lovers of chess world-wide.

In this respect we must thank David Levy (the original editor), and everyone else involved in RHM's pioneering original edition. All of the game annotations are by Tal himself, except for games 8, 11-13, 16-18, 23 and 29 (done jointly by Tal and Koblents, his Latvian trainer) and games 87, 88 and 92 (done jointly by Tal and Kirilov).

For this marvellous new algebraic version, Grandmaster John Nunn spent weeks transcribing the material from descriptive notation, checking the text and deciphering unintelligible variations. Ken Neat (who did so much fine translation work on the original version) has retranslated games 33 and 34 from Russian especially for this edition, and has also fully updated Tal's tournament and match record.

*Murray Chandler*
London, June 1997

# Tournament and Match Record

Tal, Mikhail Nekhemyevich, born 9th November 1936 in Riga. Eighth Champion of the World, six times USSR Champion, International Grandmaster, Honoured USSR Master of Sport. Holder of the Orders 'Decoration of Honour' and 'Friendship of Peoples'. Journalist. Member of the 'Daugava' Sports Society, Riga. Died 28th June 1992, in Moscow.

## Tournaments

| | PLACE | SCORE | + | − | = |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1951** | | | | | |
| 8th Latvian Championship, Riga | 11th-14th | 9/19 | not known | | |
| **1952** | | | | | |
| 9th Latvian Championship, Riga | 7th | 10/17 | 7 | 4 | 6 |
| **1953** | | | | | |
| 10th Latvian Championship, Riga | 1st | 14½/19 | 12 | 2 | 5 |
| USSR Club Team Championship, board 2: | | | | | |
| Semi-final | | 3½/7 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Final | 1st-2nd | 4½/7 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| **1954** | | | | | |
| 11th Latvian Championship, Riga | 2nd-3rd | 14½/19 | 13 | 3 | 3 |
| USSR Youth Team Championship, Leningrad, board 1 | 2nd | 7/9 | 6 | 1 | 2 |
| USSR Club Team Championship, Riga, board 1 | 9th-10th | 4/10 | 1 | 3 | 6 |
| **1955** | | | | | |
| 12th Latvian Championship, Riga | 2nd | 14/19 | not known | | |
| Baltic Zonal Tournament, Vilnius (USSR Championship Quarter-Final) | 3rd-4th | 11/17 | 7 | 2 | 8 |
| Match Latvia v. Russian Federation, Riga | 2nd | 6½/11 | 4 | 2 | 5 |
| USSR Team Championship, Voroshilovgrad, board 2 | 3rd-4th | 5½/9 | 2 | 0 | 7 |
| USSR Championship Semi-final, Riga | 1st | 12½/18 | 10 | 3 | 5 |
| **1956** | | | | | |
| 23rd USSR Championship, Leningrad | 5th-7th | 10½/17 | 6 | 2 | 9 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student Olympiad, Uppsala, board 3 | 1st | 6/7 | 5 | 0 | 2 |
| Match Latvia v. Estonia, Tartu | - | 2/4 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| USSR Championship Semi-final, Tbilisi | 5th-6th | 11½/19 | 6 | 2 | 11 |
| **1957** | | | | | |
| 24th USSR Championship, Moscow | 1st | 14/21 | 9 | 2 | 10 |
| Student Olympiad, Reykjavik, board 1 | 1st | 8½/10 | 7 | 0 | 3 |
| European Team Championship, Baden/Vienna board 4 | 1st-2nd | 3/5 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Matches Latvia v. Italian Teams | - | 9/10 | 8 | 0 | 2 |
| **1958** | | | | | |
| 25th USSR Championship, Riga | 1st | 12½/18 | 10 | 3 | 5 |
| 15th Latvian Championship, Riga | 3rd | 16½/19 | 16 | 2 | 1 |
| Student Olympiad, Varna, board 1 | 1st | 8½/10 | 7 | 0 | 3 |
| Portorož Interzonal | 1st | 13½/20 | 8 | 1 | 11 |
| Olympiad, Munich, board 5 (absolute best score in the Olympiad) | 1st | 13½/15 | 12 | 0 | 3 |
| **1959** | | | | | |
| 26th USSR Championship, Tbilisi | 2nd-3rd | 12½/19 | 9 | 3 | 7 |
| Latvian Olympiad | 1st | 7/7 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| International Tournament, Zurich | 1st | 11½/15 | 10 | 2 | 3 |
| USSR Spartakiad, Moscow, board 1: | | | | | |
| Semi-final | - | 1/4 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Final | 6th | 1½/4 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Candidates Tournament, Yugoslavia | 1st | 20/28 | 16 | 4 | 8 |
| International Tournament, Riga | 4th | 9/13 | 7 | 2 | 4 |
| **1960** | | | | | |
| Match West Germany v. USSR, Hamburg | 1st | 7½/8 | 7 | 0 | 1 |
| Olympiad, Leipzig, board 1 | 2nd | 11/15 | 8 | 1 | 6 |
| **1961** | | | | | |
| International Tournament, Stockholm, 1960/1 | 1st | 9½/11 | 8 | 0 | 3 |
| European Team Championship, Oberhausen, board 2 | - | 5½/9 | 3 | 1 | 5 |
| International Tournament, Bled | 1st | 14½/19 | 11 | 1 | 7 |
| USSR Club Team Championship Semi-final, Riga, board 1 | | 1½/3 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 29th USSR Championship, Baku | 4th-5th | 12/20 | 7 | 3 | 10 |
| USSR Club Team Championship Final, Moscow, board 1 | 5th | 2/5 | 0 | 1 | 4 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1962** | | | | | |
| Candidates Tournament, Curaçao | 7th-8th | 7/21 | 3 | 10 | 8 |
| Olympiad, Varna, board 6 | 1st | 10/13 | 7 | 0 | 6 |
| USSR Team Championship, Leningrad, board 1 | 5th-6th | 4½/8 | 1 | 0 | 7 |
| 30th USSR Championship, Erevan | 2nd-3rd | 13½/19 | 11 | 3 | 5 |
| **1963** | | | | | |
| International Tournament, Miskolc | 1st | 12½/15 | 10 | 0 | 5 |
| USSR Spartakiad, Moscow, board 1 | - | 6/9 | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| Capablanca Memorial Tournament, Havana | 2nd-4th | 16/21 | 14 | 3 | 4 |
| International Tournament, Moscow | 2nd | 10½/15 | 7 | 1 | 7 |
| **1964** | | | | | |
| International Tournament, Hastings, 1963/4 | 1st | 7/9 | 5 | 0 | 4 |
| International Tournament, Reykjavik | 1st | 12½/13 | 12 | 0 | 1 |
| Amsterdam Interzonal | 1st-4th | 17/23 | 11 | 0 | 12 |
| International Tournament, Kislovodsk | 1st | 7½/10 | 6 | 1 | 3 |
| USSR Club Team Championship, board 1: | | | | | |
| Semi-final, Tallinn | - | 5/6 | 4 | 0 | 2 |
| Final, Moscow | 1st-2nd | 4½/6 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| 32nd USSR Championship, Kiev | 3rd | 12½/19 | 9 | 3 | 7 |
| **1965** | | | | | |
| 22nd Latvian Championship, Riga | 1st | 11/14 | 8 | 0 | 6 |
| **1966** | | | | | |
| International Tournament, Sarajevo | 1st-2nd | 11/15 | 9 | 2 | 4 |
| International Tournament, Kislovodsk | 6th-7th | 5½/11 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| USSR Club Team Championship, Moscow, board 1 | 3rd-4th | 6/10 | 2 | 0 | 8 |
| Olympiad, Havana, board 3 (absolute best score in the Olympiad) | 1st | 12/13 | 11 | 0 | 2 |
| International Tournament, Palma de Mallorca | 1st | 12/15 | 9 | 0 | 6 |
| **1967** | | | | | |
| International Tournament, Moscow | 2nd-5th | 10/17 | 5 | 2 | 10 |
| Match Yugoslavia v. USSR, Budva | 2nd-3rd | 6½/11 | 3 | 1 | 7 |
| USSR Spartakiad, Moscow, board 1: | | | | | |
| Semi-final | - | 3/5 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Final | 1st | 3/4 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Match Latvia v. Romania, Riga | - | 1½/2 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 35th USSR Championship, Kharkov | 1st-2nd | 10/13 | 7 | 0 | 6 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1968** | | | | | |
| International Tournament, Wijk aan Zee | 2nd-4th | 9/15 | 5 | 2 | 8 |
| Karseladze Memorial Tournament, Gori | 1st | 7½/10 | 6 | 1 | 3 |
| USSR Club Team Championship, Riga, board 1 | 6th | 6/11 | 3 | 2 | 6 |
| **1969** | | | | | |
| 36th USSR Championship, Alma-Ata, 1968/9 | 6th-10th | 10½/19 | 6 | 4 | 9 |
| 37th USSR Championship, Moscow | 14th-15th | 10½/22 | 6 | 7 | 9 |
| **1970** | | | | | |
| Goglidze Memorial Tournament, Tbilisi, 1969/70 | 1st-2nd | 10½/15 | 7 | 1 | 7 |
| Georgian Open Championship, Poti (hors concours) | 1st | 11/14 | 9 | 1 | 4 |
| USSR v. Rest of the World, Belgrade, board 9 | - | 2/4 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| European Team Championship, Kapfenberg, board 6 | 1st | 5/6 | 4 | 0 | 2 |
| Grandmasters v. Young Masters, Sochi | 1st | 10½/14 | 9 | 2 | 3 |
| **1971** | | | | | |
| Baltic Clubs Championship, Riga | - | 1½/2 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| International Tournament, Tallinn | 1st-2nd | 11½/15 | 9 | 1 | 5 |
| International Tournament, Parnu | 2nd-3rd | 9½/13 | 7 | 1 | 5 |
| USSR Club Team Championship, Rostov-on-Don, board 1 | - | 4½/6 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| 39th USSR Championship, Leningrad | 2nd-3rd | 13½/21 | 9 | 3 | 9 |
| Alekhine Memorial Tournament, Moscow | 6th-7th | 9½/17 | 4 | 2 | 11 |
| **1972** | | | | | |
| Baltic Capitals Championship, Vilnius | - | 1/3 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Match Leningrad v. Latvia, Leningrad, board 1 | - | 1/2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| USSR Team Championship, Moscow, board 1: | | | | | |
| Semi-final | - | 3/4 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Final | - | 2½/4 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Raud Memorial Tournament, Viljandi | 2nd | 10½/13 | 9 | 1 | 3 |
| International Tournament, Sukhumi | 1st | 11/15 | 7 | 0 | 8 |
| Olympiad, Skopje, board 4 (absolute best score in the Olympiad) | 1st | 14/16 | 12 | 0 | 4 |
| 40th USSR Championship, Baku | 1st | 15/21 | 9 | 0 | 12 |
| **1973** | | | | | |
| International Tournament, Wijk aan Zee | 1st | 10½/15 | 6 | 0 | 9 |
| International Tournament, Tallinn | 1st | 12/15 | 9 | 0 | 6 |
| Match-Tournament of USSR Teams, Moscow, board 3 | - | 1½/4 | 1 | 2 | 1 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Leningrad Interzonal, Leningrad | 8th-10th | 8½/17 | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| European Team Championship, Bath, board 7 | 2nd | 4/6 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| Chigorin Memorial Tournament, Sochi | 1st | 11/15 | 7 | 0 | 8 |
| 41st USSR Championship, Moscow | 9th-12th | 8/17 | 3 | 4 | 10 |
| Match Latvia v. Russian Federation, Riga | 1st | 4/6 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| International Tournament, Dubna | 1st-2nd | 11/15 | 7 | 0 | 8 |
| **1974** | | | | | |
| International Tournament, Hastings, 1973/4 | 1st-4th | 10/15 | 5 | 0 | 10 |
| Olympiad, Nice, board 5 | 1st | 10½/15 | 8 | 0 | 7 |
| International Tournament, Lublin | 1st | 12½/15 | 10 | 0 | 5 |
| USSR Club Team Championship, Moscow, board 1 | 1st | 6½/9 | 4 | 0 | 5 |
| International Tournament, Halle | 1st | 11½/15 | 8 | 0 | 7 |
| International Tournament, Novi Sad | 1st | 11½/15 | 9 | 1 | 5 |
| Match Yugoslavia v. USSR, Belgrade | - | 3½/6 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| 42nd USSR Championship, Leningrad | 1st-2nd | 9½/15 | 6 | 2 | 7 |
| **1975** | | | | | |
| International Tournament, Las Palmas | 2nd-4th | 10/14 | 8 | 2 | 4 |
| USSR Team Championship, Riga, board 1 | - | 4½/9 | 1 | 1 | 7 |
| International Tournament, Milan | 6th-7th | 5½/11 | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| Alekhine Memorial Tournament, Moscow | 8th-9th | 8½/15 | 4 | 2 | 9 |
| 43rd USSR Championship, Erevan | 2nd-5th | 9½/15 | 5 | 1 | 9 |
| **1976** | | | | | |
| International Tournament, Wijk aan Zee | 3rd-4th | 6½/11 | 3 | 1 | 7 |
| USSR Club Team Championship, Tbilisi, board 1 | - | 3½/6 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| Biel Interzonal | 2nd-4th | 12/19 | 6 | 1 | 12 |
| Interzonal Play-off v. Petrosian & Portisch | 3rd | 3½/8 | 0 | 1 | 7 |
| 44th USSR Championship, Moscow | 6th-7th | 9/17 | 3 | 2 | 12 |
| **1977** | | | | | |
| International Tournament, Tallinn | 1st | 11/15 | 10 | 3 | 2 |
| European Team Championship, Moscow, board 4 | - | 4½/6 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| International Tournament, Las Palmas | 4th-5th | 9/15 | 6 | 3 | 6 |
| International Tournament, Leningrad | 1st-2nd | 11½/17 | 7 | 1 | 9 |
| Chigorin Memorial Tournament, Sochi | 1st | 11/15 | 8 | 1 | 6 |
| 45th USSR Championship, Leningrad | 5th-7th | 8/15 | 4 | 3 | 8 |
| **1978** | | | | | |
| International Tournament, Bugojno | 4th-5th | 8½/15 | 2 | 0 | 13 |
| USSR Club Team Championship, Semi-final, Mogilev, board 1 | - | 4/5 | 3 | 0 | 2 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 46th USSR Championship, Tbilisi | 1st-2nd | 11/17 | 5 | 0 | 12 |
| **1979** | | | | | |
| International Tournament, Tallinn | 2nd-3rd | 11½/16 | 8 | 1 | 7 |
| International Tournament, Montreal | 1st-2nd | 12/18 | 6 | 0 | 12 |
| Yugoslavia v. USSR, Teslić, board 1 | | 2½/4 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| USSR Team Championship, Moscow, board 1 | | 4½/8 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| Riag Interzonal | 1st | 14/17 | 11 | 0 | 6 |
| 47th USSR Championship, Minsk | 14th-15th | 7½/17 | 3 | 5 | 9 |
| **1980** | | | | | |
| European Team Championship, Skara, board 2 | | 2/5 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| International Tournament, Bugojno | 7th-10th | 5/11 | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| USSR Club Team Championship Semi-final, Jurmala, board 1 | - | 2/3 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| International Tournament, Erevan | 4th | 9/15 | 5 | 2 | 8 |
| International Tournament, Tilburg | 6th | 5½/11 | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| 24th Olympiad, Malta, board 3 | | 3½/6 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| **1981** | | | | | |
| USSR Team Tournament, Moscow, board 7 | | 4½/6 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| International Tournament, Tallinn | 1st | 10/15 | 5 | 0 | 10 |
| International Tournament, Malaga | 1st | 7/11 | 3 | 0 | 8 |
| USSR Team Championship, Moscow, board 1 | 1st | 7/9 | 5 | 0 | 4 |
| International Tournament, Lvov | 1st-2nd | 9/13 | 5 | 0 | 8 |
| International Tournament, Riga | 1st | 11/15 | 7 | 0 | 8 |
| **1982** | | | | | |
| International Tournament, Porz | 1st | 9/11 | 7 | 0 | 4 |
| International Tournament, Wijk aan Zee | 5th-9th | 7/13 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| International Tournament, Erevan | 1st | 10/15 | 6 | 1 | 8 |
| International Tournament, Moscow | 1st-2nd | 9/13 | 5 | 0 | 8 |
| Moscow Interzonal | 3rd-4th | 8/13 | 4 | 1 | 8 |
| Olympiad, Lucerne, board 5 | - | 6½/8 | 5 | 0 | 3 |
| Chigorin Memorial Tournament, Sochi | 1st | 10/15 | 5 | 0 | 10 |
| **1983** | | | | | |
| Keres Memorial Tournament, Tallinn | 1st-2nd | 10/15 | 6 | 1 | 8 |
| International Tournament, Jurmala | 5th-8th | 6½/13 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| USSR Team Championship, Moscow, board 1 | - | 5/9 | 1 | 0 | 8 |
| International Tournament, Nikšić | 7th-8th | 7/14 | 1 | 1 | 12 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1984** | | | | | |
| European Club Championship, 1983/4 | - | 3/6 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| International Tournament, Lvov | 5th-6th | 7/13 | 1 | 0 | 12 |
| USSR Club Team Championship, Kiev, board 1 | - | 2/4 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| International Tournament, Bugojno | 5th-9th | 6½/13 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| USSR v. Rest of the World, London, board 7 | - | 2/3 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| International Tournament, Albena | 1st-2nd | 7/11 | 5 | 2 | 4 |
| Chigorin Memorial Tournament, Sochi | 4th-5th | 8/14 | 2 | 0 | 12 |
| International Tournament, Titograd | 3rd | 6½/11 | 3 | 1 | 7 |
| **1985** | | | | | |
| Keres Memorial Tournament, Tallinn | 3rd-6th | 8½/14 | 4 | 1 | 9 |
| USSR Team Championship, Volgograd, board 1 | - | 4/7 | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| Taxco Interzonal | 3rd | 10/15 | 5 | 0 | 10 |
| International Tournament, Jurmala | 1st-2nd | 9/13 | 5 | 0 | 8 |
| Nimzowitsch Memorial Tournament, Næstved | 4th-6th | 6/11 | 2 | 1 | 8 |
| Candidates Tournament, Montpellier | 4th-5th | 8½/15 | 3 | 1 | 11 |
| **1986** | | | | | |
| European Club Championship, 1985/6 | - | 5½/9 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| Reykjavik Open Tournament | 2nd-8th | 7½/11 | 4 | 0 | 7 |
| Petrosian Memorial Tournament, Erevan | 3rd | 9/14 | 6 | 2 | 6 |
| West Berlin Open Tournament | 1st-3rd | 7½/9 | 6 | 0 | 3 |
| Chigorin Memorial Tournament, Sochi | 4th-5th | 8/14 | 3 | 1 | 10 |
| Goglidze Memorial Tournament, Tbilisi | 1st-2nd | 10/14 | 6 | 0 | 8 |
| **1987** | | | | | |
| International Tournament, Reykjavik | 2nd-3rd | 7/11 | 3 | 0 | 8 |
| International Tournament, Brussels | 6th | 6/11 | 2 | 1 | 8 |
| Subotica Interzonal | 4th-5th | 10/15 | 6 | 1 | 8 |
| International Tournament, Jurmala | 1st-4th | 7½/13 | 3 | 1 | 10 |
| International Tournament, Termas de Rio Hondo | 1st | 8/11 | 5 | 0 | 6 |
| **1988** | | | | | |
| International Tournament, Wijk aan Zee | 5th-7th | 6½/13 | 1 | 1 | 11 |
| Saint John Open Tournament | 4th-15th | 6/9 | 3 | 0 | 6 |
| World Cup Tournament, Brussels | 10th-13th | 7½/16 | 3 | 4 | 9 |
| Goglidze Memorial Tournament, Tbilisi | 7th | 5/10 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| World Cup Tournament, Reykjavik | 3rd | 10/17 | 4 | 1 | 12 |
| **1989** | | | | | |
| Seniors v. Juniors, Cannes | - | 1½/5 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| International Tournament, Marseilles | 4th-5th | 4½/8 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| World Cup Tournament, Skellefteå | 10th-12th | 7/15 | 0 | 1 | 14 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1990** | | | | | |
| Bundesliga 1989/90 | - | 5½/10 | 2 | 1 | 7 |
| International Tournament, Tel Aviv | 2nd-4th | 7½/11 | 4 | 0 | 7 |
| USSR Club Team Championship, Podolsk, | | | | | |
| Semi-final, board 1 | - | 3½/5 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| New York Open Tournament | 9th-19th | 5½/9 | 3 | 1 | 5 |
| GMA Tournament, Moscow | 24th-34th | 5/11 | 0 | 1 | 10 |
| Manila Interzonal | 29th-39th | 6½/13 | 3 | 3 | 7 |
| Moscow Open Tournament | 3rd-8th | 6½/9 | 4 | 0 | 5 |
| **1991** | | | | | |
| Bundesliga 1990/91 | | 5/6 | 5 | 1 | 0 |
| International Tournament, San Francisco | 3rd-6th | 6/11 | 2 | 1 | 8 |
| International Tournament, Buenos Aires | 1st-3rd | 8½/13 | 4 | 0 | 9 |
| Moscow Open Tournament | | not known | | | |
| Leningrad Open Tournament | - | 6/9 | 4 | 1 | 4 |
| 58th USSR Championship, Moscow | 39th-49th | 5/11 | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| **1992** | | | | | |
| Bundesliga 1991/92 | - | 1½/3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| International Open Tournament, Porz | 4th-10th | 7/9 | 5 | 4 | 0 |
| International Open Tournament, Seville | 4th-14th | 7/9 | 6 | 1 | 2 |
| International Tournament, Barcelona | 8th-10th | 5½/11 | 3 | 3 | 5 |

## Matches

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1954** | | | | |
| Match for the title of Soviet Master v. Saigin | 8-6 | 4 | 2 | 8 |
| **1960** | | | | |
| Match for the World Championship v. Botvinnik, Moscow | 12½-8½ | 6 | 2 | 13 |
| **1961** | | | | |
| Return Match for the World Championship v. Botvinnik, Moscow | 8-13 | 5 | 10 | 6 |
| **1965** | | | | |
| Quarter-Final Candidates Match v. Portisch, Bled | 5½-2½ | 4 | 1 | 3 |
| Semi-final Candidates Match v. Larsen, Bled | 5½-4½ | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Final Candidates Match v. Spassky, Tbilisi | 4-7 | 1 | 4 | 6 |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1966** | | | | |
| Training Match v. Bronstein | 2½-1½ | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| **1968** | | | | |
| Quarter-Final Candidates Match v. Gligorić, Belgrade | 5½-3½ | 3 | 1 | 5 |
| Semi-final Candidates Match v. Korchnoi, Moscow | 4½-5½ | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| **1969** | | | | |
| Candidates 3rd place Match v. Larsen, Eersel | 2½-5½ | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| **1970** | | | | |
| USSR Cup, Dnepropetrovsk: | | | | |
| v. Bagirov | 3-1 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| v. Gufeld | 2½-1½ | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| v. Savon | 1½-2½ | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| **1976** | | | | |
| Match v. Andersson, Stockholm | 4½-3½ | 1 | 0 | 7 |
| **1980** | | | | |
| Quarter-Final Candidates Match v. Polugaevsky, Alma Ata | 2½-5½ | 0 | 3 | 5 |
| **1983** | | | | |
| Interzonal Play-off Match v. Andersson, Malmö | 3-3 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| **1985** | | | | |
| Candidates Play-off Match v. Timman, Montpellier | 3-3 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| **1988** | | | | |
| Training Match v. Timman, Hilversum | 3½-2½ | 2 | 1 | 3 |

# 1 My First Steps

Dialogue between a chess player and a journalist
(instead of an autobiography)

*Dramatis personae:*
A CHESS PLAYER. Mikhail Tal
A JOURNALIST. Who knows, perhaps alias ...

JOURNALIST. *Well now, 'Shall we begin?'. Did you think, on first sitting down at the chessboard, that you would at some time play a match for the World Championship? Incidentally, what do you recall of your first game?*

CHESS PLAYER. Did I think ... Probably not. Matches for the World Championship are fairly rare events, and from the physical point of view it is simply not possible for many chess fans to take part in them. I say fans, because, after all, even professionals are chess fans.

But about my first game. When one of us first plays chess, he is like a man who has already caught a dose of microbes of, say, Hong Kong 'flu. Such a man walks along the street, and he does not yet know that he is ill. He is healthy, he feels fine, but the microbes are doing their work.

Something similar, though less harmful, occurs in chess. You have just been shown that the knight moves like the Russian letter Г, the bishop diagonally, the castle (note, the castle, not the rook) in a straight line, while the queen (once again not the fyerz[1], but the queen!) – likes her own colour. You lose the first game. But at some time, if your father or elder brother or simply an old friend wants to be kind to you, then you win, and as a result feel very proud of yourself. A few days pass, and suddenly you involuntarily begin to sense that, without chess, there is something missing in your life. Then you may rejoice: you belong to that group of people without a natural immunity to the chess disease ...

This is the way we all begin. And then – the same road; for some it is smooth, for others less so. But when you sit down to play a match for the World Championship, then sometimes you recall that first game.

I lost my first serious game. To my cousin. And when, for the first time in my life, I fell into 'scholar's mate', it was a real tragedy, because at that time I

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1 'Fyerz', derived from Indian, is the special Russian chess term for the queen – *Translator's note.*

considered myself to be an experienced player. The fact is that my elders were extremely kind, and while learning I had many more 'victories' to my credit than defeats.

And then this tragedy. The first in the whole of my 10 years ...

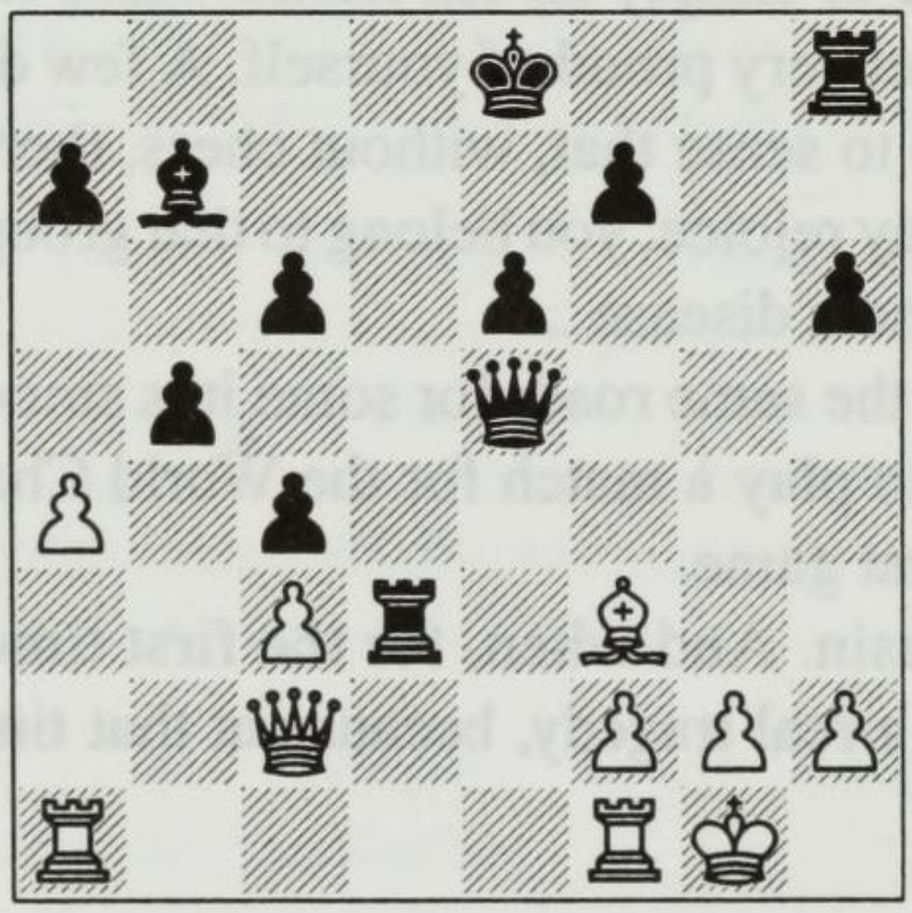
Then, for some completely different reason – it seems that I wanted to join a drama group – I entered the Riga Palace of Pioneers. In the corridor I suddenly noticed a sign on one of the doors: 'Chess Section'. Excellent!, I thought. I'll go in and say to the man who is helping the others that my feelings have been hurt, and he will teach me and show me how to win.

I went in. I wasn't shown anything straight away, but I stayed. I stayed, and became fascinated, perhaps because I was very fortunate with my first chess teacher. His name, Yanis Kruzkop, will not be familiar to many chess players. But he has done a great deal for chess, since in all his pupils he has implanted, to put it stylistically, a whole-hearted love for the game.

After a few months of lessons I began winning against my elder brother. But – what a terrible thing – in doing so I did not feel any particular satisfaction, for I saw that he was not playing well. The time had come to seek stronger opponents ...

JOURNALIST. *Would you recall for us, please, all your first games; the first in a tournament, the first against a master, the first to appear in print.*

CHESS PLAYER. Of course I first played against a master in a simultaneous display. The young master Ratmir Kholmov, who had just made a very successful appearance in the 1947 International Chigorin Memorial Tournament, came to Riga, and therefore we were all highly intrigued. I won in, as it then seemed to me, combinative style.

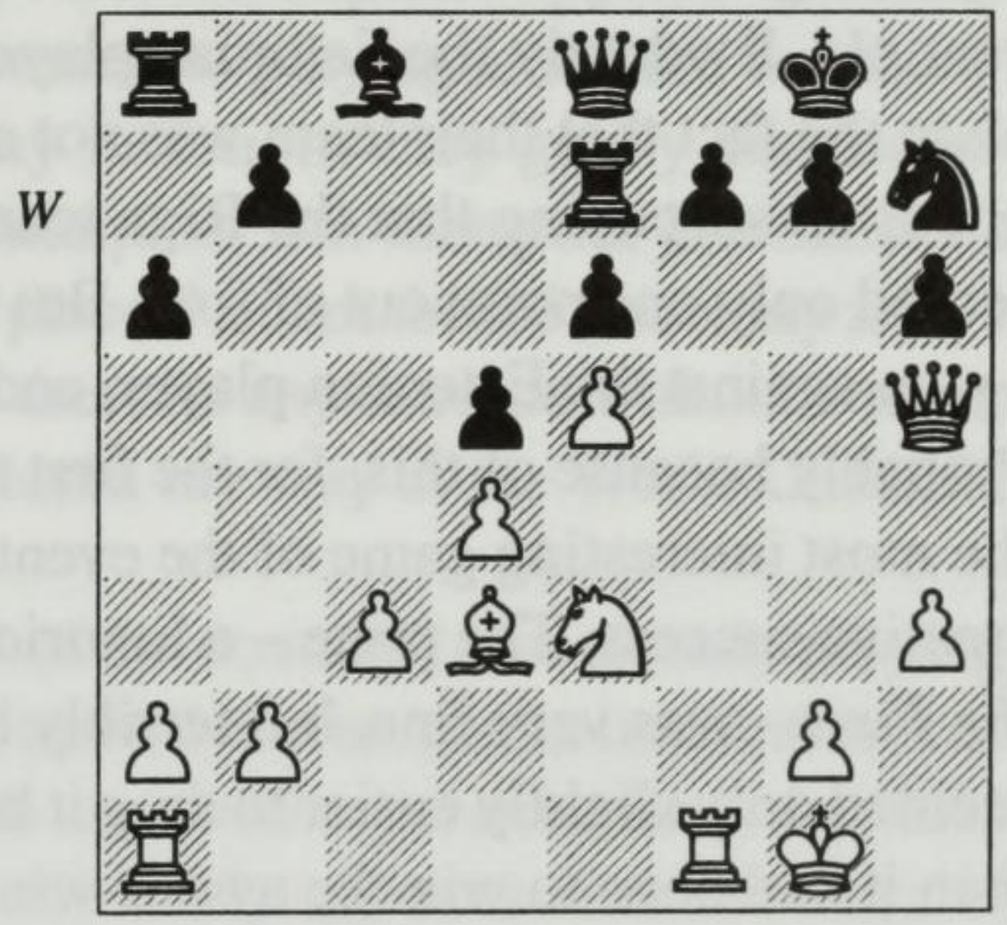



**Kholmov – Tal**
*Riga simul 1949*

**18 axb5 ♖xf3 19 ♖xa7 ♕xb5 20 gxf3** (20 ♖b1 ♖xc3!) **20...♕g5+ 21 ♔h1 ♖g8 0-1**

My first serious tournament was the Riga Youth Championship. At that time I had a fourth category rating, obtained at the Pioneers' Palace. It was a pretty low rating, but according to some unofficial data I was considered to be a promising player, and was allowed into the Championship.

I started very well: three out of three. But then for the first, and, unfortunately, not the last time, I had to go directly from the tournament to hospital on account of scarlet fever. And on the same day that this occurred, a mass match over 100 boards was held in Riga between adults and young players. I played somewhere around board 45, and an indication of the way I was feeling can be gained from the fact that I was mated as White in about 8 moves. Incidentally, it was one of my three starting wins which first appeared in print, in the All-Union youth magazine *Zatyeynik*.



**Tal – Leonov**
*Riga Junior Ch Semi-final, 1949*

**19 ♖f6!** A blockading sacrifice, by which White prevents 19...f5, while threatening 20 ♖xh6. **19...♕f8 20 ♖f4 ♗d7 21 ♘g4** The pressure mounts. **21...♗e8 22 ♘f6+! ♘xf6 23 exf6 ♖c7 24 fxg7 ♔xg7 25 ♕e5+ 1-0**

JOURNALIST. *Well? Did you cut the article out?*

CHESS PLAYER. No, I didn't – but I was very pleased with it!

JOURNALIST. *And had you reached the level where you would dream about games or adjourned positions?*

CHESS PLAYER. This happened to me even a little earlier, in 1947, and turned out excellently! In one of the innumerable tournaments at the Pioneers'

Palace I adjourned a game against Krapivner, a second category player, in what I then considered to be a hopeless position. That evening I tried everything I could in the position, for the resumption was the following morning. I could find nothing, and so I decided that I would go in and resign. But during the night I dreamed about some unintelligible idea connected – I remember this clearly – with the adjourned game. On resumption I thought for some 10 minutes, and found it!

But then, unfortunately, I dropped below 'that level', and never again in my life have I dreamed about an adjourned game.

Then, by-passing the third category, I succeeded in gaining the second category rating in my next tournament, and I now began to take a real interest in chess. And if we are still talking about 'firsts', then I must recall my first departure from Riga to the 'International', as we then proudly considered it, Tournament of Pioneers' Palaces of the three Baltic Republics. We had to travel to Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania.

Our team was the youngest there. I, for instance, was only 12 years old. And in my first game against the Estonians my opponent was a very adult-looking 16-17 year old. Evidently the Estonian players had come only to win, which would explain the fact that their team was not altogether made up of Pioneers. And it was not at all surprising that the Riga team took last place, while on second board I scored only one point out of four. But it was this point that proved decisive, since I won against the Estonian player, and as a result the home team took first place. Probably because of this, for the first time in my life, I was awarded the prize for the most interesting game of the event, although I was highly sceptical about my creative success. The prize – a luxurious edition of Aleksei Tolstoy's book *Peter the First* – was very fine, but terribly heavy. And when it was presented to me, it seemed only slightly easier to drag it back to the table where our team was sitting, than it had been to win the award-winning game ...

In the next year, 1949, I took part in official All-Union events for the first time, when I played for the Latvian youth team in the Championship of the Soviet Union. Incidentally, during the six years that my age allowed me to take part in youth events, I progressed from the last to the first board in our team. In my first game – it was in the match with Byelorussia – I won, but this success proved to be my only one. I recall a curious encounter from the tournament with the Lithuanian candidate master Mendeleevsky, which at one point shook my youthful belief in the irreproachability of the elite.

The point is that a year earlier in the Match-Tournament for the World Championship, Botvinnik had sacrificed a pawn in the Slav Defence, and had won very nicely against Euwe. At that time I frequently played this opening, and during the game I established the fact that Mendeleevsky and I were conscientiously

following the steps of Botvinnik and Euwe. In addition, I recalled very well that the theorists had condemned the pawn capture, and had recommended another move instead. In particular, Botvinnik had stated this in his notes to the game. And at the board I thought for a very long time, trying to disprove Botvinnik, because I thought to myself: surely Euwe, such an expert on theory, couldn't have made a mistake. In the end, 'boldly' following the Dutch Ex-World Champion, I also obtained a lost position, and lengthy thought led to my first loss on time and, thank God, this was the only one in all my years of chess.

JOURNALIST. *Does this mean that your 'single combat' with the World Champion began at this point? Or should account be taken of the summer of 1948, when you set off with a chessboard to play against Botvinnik, who had arrived on holiday?*

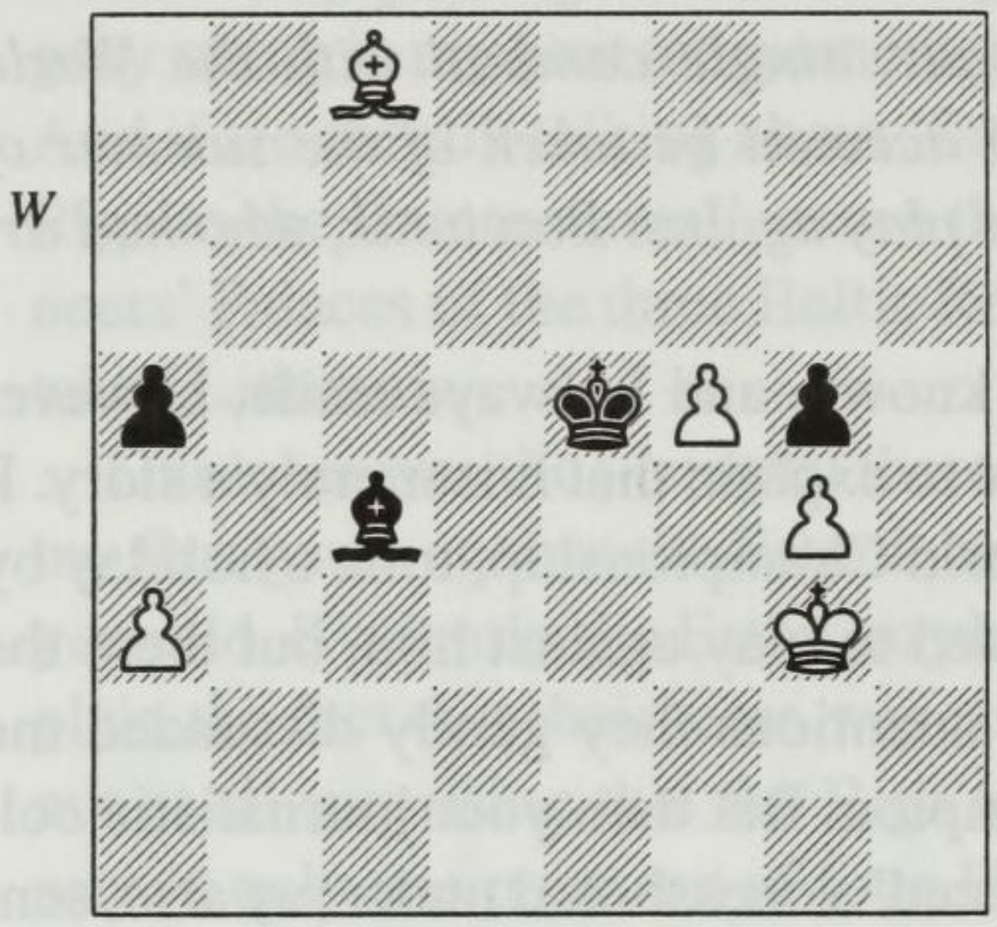
CHESS PLAYER. This story is widely known, and I always smile, however many times I hear it. But it is evidently time to explain that it is merely a story. It is true that Botvinnik, after winning the World Championship, took a holiday by the sea at Riga. I knew about this and wanted to play against him, but there the truth ends. When I told my family of my intentions they gently dissuaded me from issuing a challenge to the World Champion. But then your journalistic colleagues heard about it, and immediately 'placed' a chessboard under my arm, sent me off to play Botvinnik, and – how can there be any intrigue without women! – introduced into the act a woman, who barred my way at the World Champion's door.

In the following Youth Championship of the country I was already playing on a higher board for Latvia, and on this occasion I was taught an instructive lesson. We had to play a preliminary match with our contemporaries from the Russian Federation, for which we travelled to Yaroslavl. My opponent was a strong player, the very likeable Victor Golenishev, a future master. Our first game progressed with changing fortunes, and was adjourned in an ending slightly inferior for me. But analysis disclosed that I could obtain by force a position with a knight against two bishops, and nothing else on the board.

Only relatively recently, eighteen months to two years previously, had I learned to give mate to a lone king with two bishops, and, naturally, did not suspect that, having a knight, I would face any difficulties. Therefore, when this position was reached, I began trying to catch my opponent's eye, expecting an offer of a draw. But play went on, and still no offer, and after 10-12 moves I began to sense that it was not at all so simple. In the end I lost the game, and only managed to gain my revenge 11 years later in my second match with Botvinnik, when I won a similar ending (17th Match game, 1961 – *Translator's note*).

A striking example of the benefit of youth tournaments!

On that occasion, in Yaroslavl, we did not reach the final. But in the following year, as a result of a very interesting trip to Kishinyev – I had never before been so far away from home, and people looked at us as foreigners – we reached the final, since we defeated the Moldavian lads. There I played what was evidently the first successful ending in my life. Everyone thought that the bishop ending where I was a pawn up would be a draw, but we managed to find an interesting bishop manoeuvre which gave White a forced win.




**Tal – Giterman**
*USSR Junior Team Ch, 1951*

**44 ♔f3 ♗f7 45 ♗b7 ♗g8 46 ♔e3 ♗f7 47 ♗f3 ♗g8 48 ♔d3 ♗a2 49 ♗e2 ♗d5 50 ♗d1 ♗g8 51 ♔c3 ♗f7 52 ♗b3 ♗e8 53 ♗d1 ♗f7 54 ♗f3 ♗a2 55 ♗c6 ♗g8 56 ♗b5 ♗d5 57 ♗e2** Zugzwang! **57...♗f7 58 ♗c4 ♗e8 59 ♔b3 ♗c6 60 ♗e2** The bishop finishes its dance. **60...a4+ 61 ♔b4 ♔f6 62 ♔c5 ♗e8 63 ♗b5 1-0**

In the final I was now playing on board four, and enjoyed at that time the reputation of a hussar-like tactician, always ready to sacrifice something. But here, taking into account the team's interests, our captain advised me to play quietly and reservedly. The results were immediately apparent! In the very first round, playing White in a well-known variation of the Caro-Kann Defence, I sacrificed a pawn according to theory – I considered that I had the right to do this – but then the normal continuation of the attack was to sacrifice two further pawns, and, in some cases, a rook. Bearing in mind what my captain had said, I began looking for a peaceful solution to the position, got into time-trouble and lost. This happened every time that I attempted to play reservedly and accurately. It was only when my opponents themselves thrust wild complications upon me, and I could not avoid them, that I was successful.

Besides, I already considered myself to be quite an experienced player. At the end of 1950 I had made my debut in the adult Championship of Riga. In the quarter-final I scored 12½ out of 13, and reached the first category norm, then from the semi-final I went through to the final. I finished the Championship with 9 points out of 19, somewhere in the region of 11th-14th places. However, it was something else that was rather curious.

There were two masters playing in the final – Alexander Koblents from Riga, my future trainer, and, *hors concours*, the Muscovite Evgeny Zagoryansky, together with five candidate masters and 13 first category players. Against the masters I scored 1½ points, and was pleased with my defence of a difficult position against Zagoryansky. My score against the candidates was 3½, but against my fellow first category players – 4 out of 12!

Nevertheless, I got through to the Latvian Championship, although this was my fourth tournament in a row and perhaps a little more attention should have been paid to my school work, especially since the third quarter of the school year was finishing.

The tournament began not at all badly for me. In the first round I saved my game against Strautmanis in a way that I liked then, and still do – I fell into a trap, so as to then catch my opponent in it. I got into a difficult position as Black, but then found a combination, apparently overlooking a tactical blow, but in fact winning my opponent's queen for rook and bishop by force. The game finished as a draw. In the second round I fairly quickly defeated the Liepaya player Gravitis, but then in the third round came a tragedy which thoroughly upset me. In my game against the candidate master Zhdanov I played, as I still consider, quite well. As Black in the Marshall Attack I carried out a fairly interesting combination. I allowed my opponent to obtain a second queen with check, but when he did this, it became clear that his position was quite hopeless; then, in an elementary won position, thinking that I could win just as I pleased, I simply blundered away a piece. There was still a draw to be had, but I completely went to pieces at this sudden turn of events, and lost the game. Following this I lost several more games, practically without a struggle, so that about six rounds from the finish I was firmly seated in one of the bottom places. But towards the end the spring holidays began. School gave me, as it were, time out to regain my strength, and in the remaining games I gained some five points, so that for the second successive time I shared 11th-14th places with 9 points out of 19.

JOURNALIST. *Were you thinking at this time about your chess future; not about the World Championship title, of course, but at least of the title of master?*

CHESS PLAYER. I'm afraid that this may now sound coquettish, but at that time I simply played chess and gained pleasure from it.

JOURNALIST. *But surely you wanted to do battle with famous players?*

CHESS PLAYER. Yes, of course, I very much enjoyed doing so. Even at that time I was occasionally able to do this, though only in simultaneous displays.

My first such encounter was with Keres, our neighbour from the north, our idol. He came to give a simultaneous display against us, and although he was engaged at that time in the battle for the chess crown, I considered it unethical to play against him in a normal display. I was, after all, a finalist in the Latvian Championship, a solid first category player. So I put my name down for a display with clocks, which Keres gave on 10 boards.

He suffered two defeats – at the hands of future grandmasters Gipslis and myself. And I was very pleased with this game, not so much because I won, but more because I defeated Keres in the Botvinnik Variation. I thought that psychologically this would be a terrible shock for him, since Keres and Botvinnik were always considered to be, as it were, fundamental opponents at the chessboard. Time passed. Paul Petrovich and I played together in tournaments for several years. Once I asked him whether he remembered our first encounter. Yes, he replied, in Tallinn, in the match between Latvia and Estonia. No, I told him, earlier, in Riga, in a simultaneous display. Here Paul Petrovich admitted that he had completely forgotten this game – and I had thought that a defeat in the Botvinnik Variation would remain in his memory for ever ...

In the following year, 1952, once again in the Latvian Championship, I acquired that very nice habit, which is still with me, of losing my first game. Since this occurred in the opening 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗d3(??) ♘f6 4 c3 where I was playing Black, I was upset and gained a further two noughts almost straight away. Then things turned for the better, I finished up in 7th place, and inflicted the only defeat on the Latvian Champion Pasman.

In the Youth Championship of the Country our team had its usual troubles, while I was also concerned about the problem of my further education. I finished school at the age of fifteen and a half, since previously I had been accepted directly into the third year. I sent my application to the Law Faculty of the University, but they pointed out to me that I would finish University when I was 20, and according to the law I could be a Public Assessor, cr fulfil certain other juridical functions, only from the age of 21, so after University I would have a year of enforced idleness. Then special permission was received from the Ministry in Moscow, from which it appeared that I had the right to study at the Philological Faculty. I heard about this during the Youth Championships. I loved literature

and had nothing against the idea. I flew home, passed the exam, and registered.

Towards the end of the same year, I played for the first time in an adult team – 'Daugavi' – which took part in group two of the USSR Championship. Incidentally, an amusing incident occurred there: I played a game, the result of which I do not know to this day.

It was in the final round. I got into a bad position, but on resumption succeeded in confusing matters, and my opponent, losing his head in time-trouble, began to repeat moves. The repetition was somewhat veiled, but the same position occurred three times. In accordance with the rules, I did not make my 55th move, but called the chief controller, and asked him to record the draw. But my opponent, in a very loud stentorian-like voice, said that I was a boy, that I had no idea of what was meant by repetition of position, and showed the controller his scoresheet.

The controller took a quick glance, said that there had been no repetition, and told us to play on. My opponent emerged from time-trouble, then realised his advantage and won. Later I went up to the assistant chief controller, and asked him to explain things. We quickly set up the position, and decided that the repetition had occurred. What was I to do? Shortly afterwards, while I was wondering whether or not to submit a protest, the chief controller came up to me with tables in his hand, and began trying to persuade me that the game was of no great importance, that all the same our team would take third place, that all the same I would not win the individual tournament on my board, so that on the whole there was no point in creating a fuss.

He went away, whereupon the other controllers came up and said that the chief controller had offended them, and that I should submit a protest. So I wrote one out, but then our train left, and therefore to this day I do not know the control team's decision.

JOURNALIST. *And who was the chief controller?*

CHESS PLAYER. Is it important? On a couple of subsequent occasions he was the chief controller of tournaments where I was playing. And both times, for some reason, I forgot to ask him what had been the result of that game ...

But, to be honest, I very quickly forgot about it. Especially since I soon gained my first real success: in the Latvian Championship I took first place. Mind you, I couldn't avoid doing so. The point was that from 1951, each year for a period of five years, the Championship of the Republic was won 'according to tradition' by a first-year student from the University. In 51 Pasman from the Faculty of History, in 52 Klyavin from Physics-Mathematics, in 54 Klovans from the Faculty of Economics, and in 55 Gipslis, so that when in 1953 I was the only first-year in the

Championship, victory came 'of its own accord'. I played well, although I lost to the master Koblents in a game which he remembers to this day.

In that game I played the opening badly, but then he missed a tactical stroke, and in addition had very little time left on his clock, but here, in his time pressure, I played 'a tempo', and lost my queen. With his flag raised, Koblents made his 39th move, got up and prepared to walk away, thinking that the control had been reached. I warned him that he was mistaken. Koblents was most mistrustful of my words, but all the same he sat down and made another move a few seconds before the fall of his flag, whereupon I resigned. He then checked his scoresheet, found the mistake in it, and 'began to respect' me.

By the way, at that moment we two were the only real challengers for first place, but then the Maestro, as Koblents was called by everyone, dropped back somewhat ...

Youth as a whole did well in the tournament, so that when, in the autumn, after the Youth Championship of the Country where I succeeded in playing the fairly lively game against Birbrager given here, we set off for the Adult Team Championship of the USSR, the Latvian team appeared unexpectedly young, with 16 year-olds Tal and Gipslis, and 17 year-old Klovans. Only our leader, Koblents, and one other player, could be called experienced fighters. It was to Koblents that the witty Lithuanian master Vistanestskis addressed himself – 'What are you doing? It is after 1st September, and time for children to be at school, and you are making them play chess!' Taking into account our previous rather poor performances, few saw us as potential finalists.

We played with great enthusiasm, and not only reached the final, but even took fourth place there, ahead of the weakened, but nevertheless formidable, Ukrainian team. On the third board Klyavin played splendidly, and as a result gained the master title. I also reached the master norm, but the All-Union Classification Committee considered it inexpedient to give the title straight away to two members of the same team (and on board 2 I had gained less points than Klyavin). Instead I was granted the right to play a qualifying match with the then practically permanent Champion of Byelorussia, the master Vladimir Saigin.

From the team tournament, the game with Korchnoi sticks in my memory; it was our first game. We played each other twice, but it was our first encounter in the opening round of the semi-final which so affected the score between us, which, as is well known, is not at all in my favour.

Before the start of play I was naturally nervous: at that time Korchnoi was already considered to be a certain candidate for the grandmaster title. In an Alekhine Defence I obtained the better position, then saw a chance to increase the pressure, and a forced variation. I went in for it and ... adjourned the game with a minimal

advantage for my opponent. On resumption I defended stubbornly, but all the same resigned towards the end of the first hundred moves. There was some consolation in the fact that in the final Korchnoi finished below me.

JOURNALIST. *At that time you were already having to play fairly important, and sometimes decisive, games. How did you manage in them?*

CHESS PLAYER. At that time not very well, especially in team events when I was tortured by a sense of heightened responsibility. I tried to restrain myself, but to play 'not your own game', to play against yourself, is always difficult and unpleasant. Later, within eighteen months to two years, I began to succeed in decisive games, perhaps because I realised a very simple truth: not only was I worried, but also my opponent.

The year 1954 began for me with my first tournament game against a Grandmaster, none other than Keres. We travelled to Tallinn for the traditional friendly match, in which there was normally a hard battle on the men's boards, while on the two women's boards the ladies from Estonia always defeated ours. For some reason I, and not Koblents, was on board one, and when it became known that Keres would be playing, my team-mates gloomily joked that the number of our ladies' boards had become three: boards nine, ten and one.

The surprises, some of them really touching, began as early as the station in Tallinn, when among those there to meet us we saw Keres. We, who were mainly lads, were taken in his car to the hotel, and for literally each of us he found a friendly, welcoming smile.

The first round was played that evening. Our game began with the King's Indian Defence, and I remember that on the 6th move I had a strong urge to exchange queens. However, I did not want to play openly for a draw, and later I realised that I would have been unlikely to gain one against such a virtuoso as Keres.

At a later stage I played sharply, Keres seized the initiative, and I admired the way that, in time-trouble, he left himself literally 3-5 seconds for his last move, and, having worked everything out, captured my piece, not fearing the series of checks which then commenced. Of course I lost the adjourned game, but I drew the second as Black, finding an unexpected move in a somewhat inferior ending.

JOURNALIST. *But all the same, you were a candidate master, whereas Keres was number two or three in the world. Wasn't it frightening?*

CHESS PLAYER. No, it was very interesting.

JOURNALIST. *And have you never been afraid of anyone?*

CHESS PLAYER. Before a game with Korchnoi, for instance, or with Spassky or Keres, against whom the score is clearly not in my favour, I might be nervous, feel uncomfortable or even afraid, but on sitting down at the board, I would forget about everything: I would become engrossed in the game.

JOURNALIST. *Did you ever head for a draw from the very first move?*

CHESS PLAYER. In all my life, only once. In the 1955 USSR Team Championship Semi-final, playing White against Korchnoi, after the moves 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5, I captured on d5. I was terribly ashamed, and from that time I swore: to play for a draw, at any rate with White, is to some degree a crime against chess.

After the team match, the Latvian Championship was held. I was 'physically' unable to win it, since I was now in my second year of study, and I shared second and third places with Gipslis. Then in the summer I played the match with Saigin. At that time, in testing us, the Chess Federation was rather careful in its choice of examiners for those seeking the master title. It may be recalled that, a few months before becoming a Grandmaster and a candidate for the World Championship, Petrosian played such a match, as did Kholmov a little later.

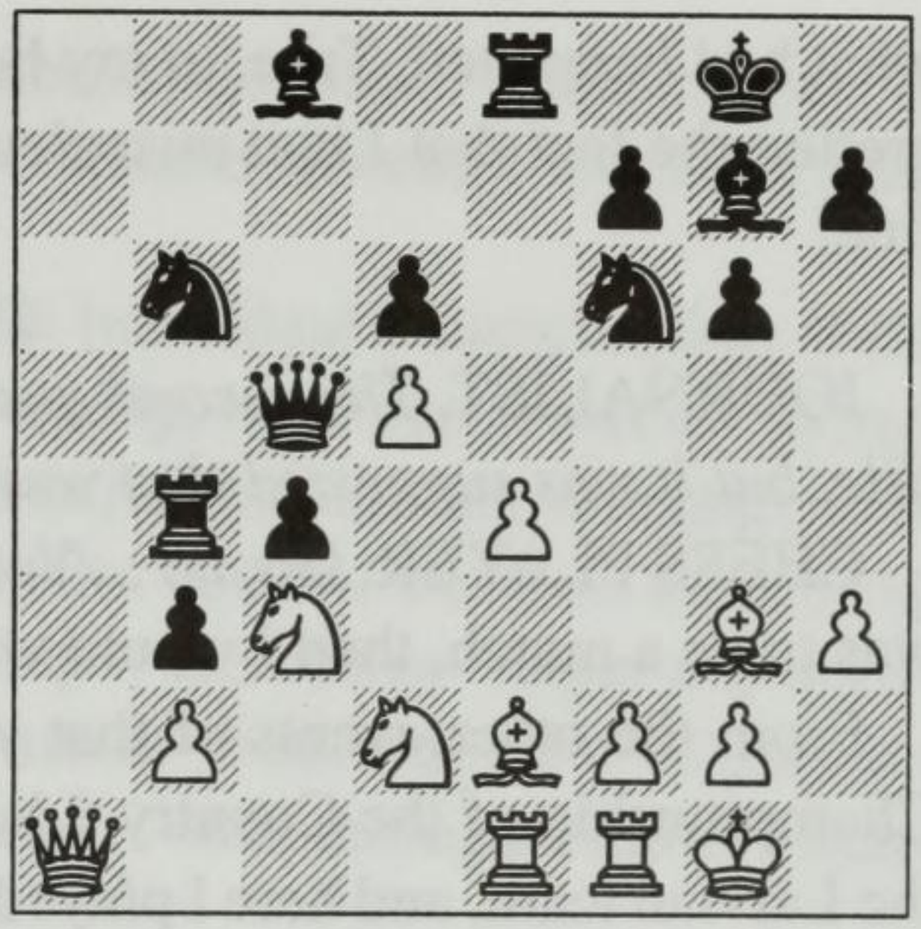
My match with Saigin proceeded in a very lively fashion. To this day the impression has not left me that at some point the Byelorussian master simply felt sorry for me, and played the last few games at only half strength. The first game, which was very interesting, ended in a draw. Just at that time we were studying the so-called Belgrade Gambit, and in the Pioneers' Palace we rehearsed the most interesting and head-spinning variations.

Of course, the decision to make this opening my main weapon as White against Saigin was clearly attributable, in the main, to the fact that I was only eighteen years old. In the second game I was a little careless in the opening, and lost in 17 moves. I won the third with roughly the same 'speed'. Then came a series of draws which we each secured in turn.

The best game of the match was the eighth, which is given here, and which I won, but the tenth also sticks in my mind. In it the pieces were so amusingly placed, that you might have thought that it was being played by beginners! (*see diagram on next page*)

**26 ♗f4 ♘fd7 27 ♗e3 ♕c7 28 ♕a5 ♗xc3 29 bxc3 ♖a4 30 ♕b5 ♖e7 31 ♖a1 ♗a6 32 ♕c6 ♕xc6 33 dxc6 ♘c5 34 ♖xa4 ♘bxa4 35 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 36 ♘xc4 ♘xc3 37 ♖a1 ♘5a4 38 ♗d4 ♘e2+ 39 ♔f1 ♘xd4 40 ♖xa4 ♘xc6 41 ♖a6 ♖c7 42 ♘xd6 b2 43 ♖b6 ♘b4 44 ♖xb4 ♖c1+ 45 ♔e2 b1♕ 46 ♖xb1 ♖xb1 47 ♘c4 ½-½**

The eleventh game could have been fatal. My opponent, who was coming back



**Saigin – Tal**
*Match for the title of*
*Soviet Master (10), Riga 1954*

into the match, attacked. I defended, and by a simple exchange could have left myself with essentially an extra rook. To my misfortune, the idea of a fantastically beautiful win came into my head. I played for it, the situation grew tense, both kings were threatened with mate, and suddenly I discovered that the whole point of my combination lay in the move ♗f8-g5(!!!). Since bishops don't move that way, I had to resign.

It was here that I had the unsubstantiated feeling that Saigin was not especially pleased with such a win, and that he played the next two games as if he were feeling guilty. I managed to win them and this terminated the match ahead of schedule, although we also played the final game.

JOURNALIST. *Two questions occurred to me in connection with this. All these attempts of yours to find more complicated wins have cost, and still cost you, more points than perhaps anyone else in the world. Surely life must have taught you something?*

CHESS PLAYER. Yes, it probably has. Nowadays, in my opinion, this happens less frequently, but, you see, sometimes an idea occurs which is so interesting that it proves stronger than me. I can recall the game with Veltmander from the match Russian Federation-Latvia, 1955, and that with Sveshnikov from the 1973 USSR Championship. But perhaps it is not worth recalling them?

JOURNALIST. *Yes, it is!*

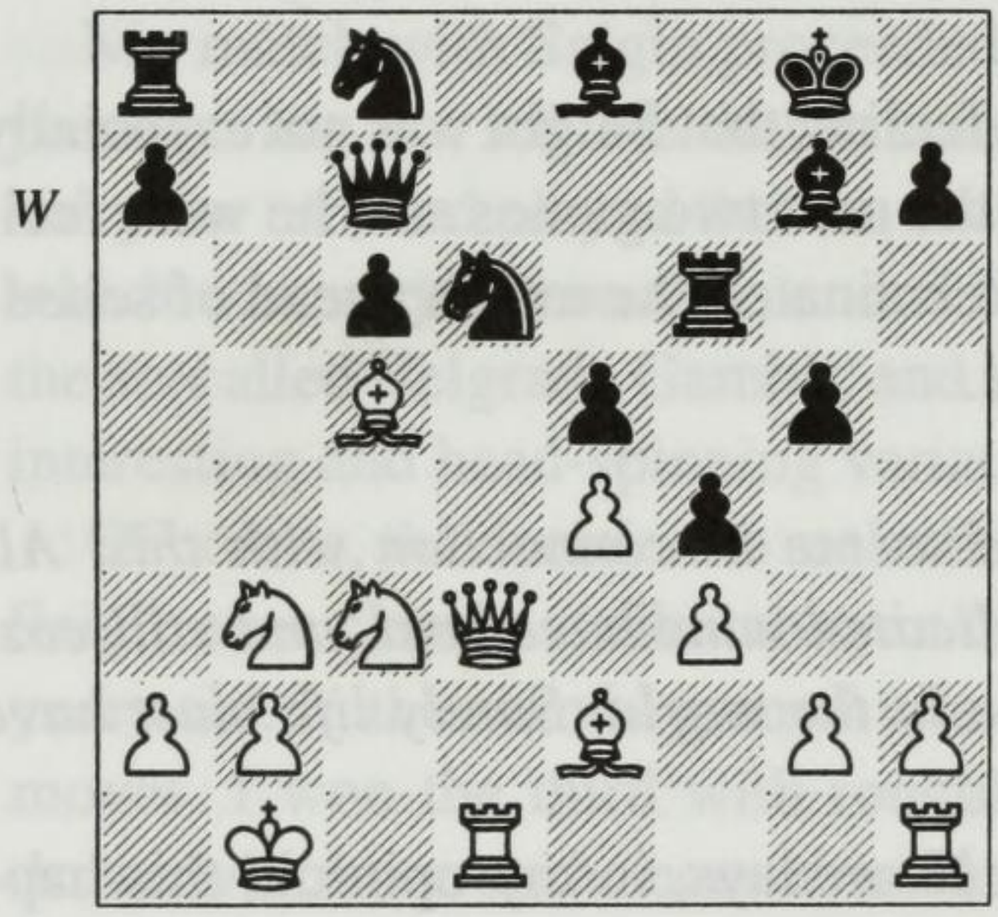
CHESS PLAYER. Then concerning my game with Veltmander: he gave a last, dying check. I could have moved my king to b2, after which mate in three was inevitable, but from the aesthetic point of view this for some reason appeared unattractive to me. I allowed him some play, and with difficulty gained a draw. An unpleasant situation arose, for I was simply unable to explain to my team-mates

what had happened. True, in my heart I remained faithful to myself, and only regretted the fact that I had miscalculated. Otherwise everything would have been fine!

JOURNALIST. *The second question: when you were not awarded the master title, but it was suggested that you play a match, were you offended?*

CHESS PLAYER. Oh, no ... You see, I was so cocky that I thought that if there was to be a match, then I would win it.

From the other events of that year I should like to mention the Youth Team Championship of the Country. I had by now ascended from last to first board in the Latvian team, and here I played for the first time against the leader of the Leningrad team, Boris Spassky. The board one tournament was highly respectable: apart from Spassky and myself there were future Grandmasters Gufeld and Liberzon, and International Master Bagirov. Spassky and I had our own special race: he scored 7½ out of 9, and I half a point less, but I succeeded in carrying out a combination, the idea of which I found pleasing:



**Tal – Visotskis**
*USSR Youth Team Ch, Leningrad 1954*

**21 ♘d5** This looks like an oversight. **21...cxd5 22 ♕xd5+ ♘f7 23 ♕xa8 ♗c6 24 ♗b6!! axb6 25 ♖c1 ♗xa8 26 ♖xc7 ♖c6 27 ♖c1 ♖xc7 28 ♖xc7** Black cannot complain about the material situation, but now all his pieces are badly placed. **28...♘cd6 29 ♘d2 ♗f8 30 ♗c4 b5 31 ♗e6 ♔g7 32 a4 ♔f6 33 ♗xf7 ♘xf7 34 axb5 ♗b4 35 ♘c4 g4 36 ♖a7 gxf3 37 gxf3 ♗xe4+ 38 fxe4 ♘g5 39 b6 ♗c5 40 ♖a6 ♘e6 41 b7 1-0**

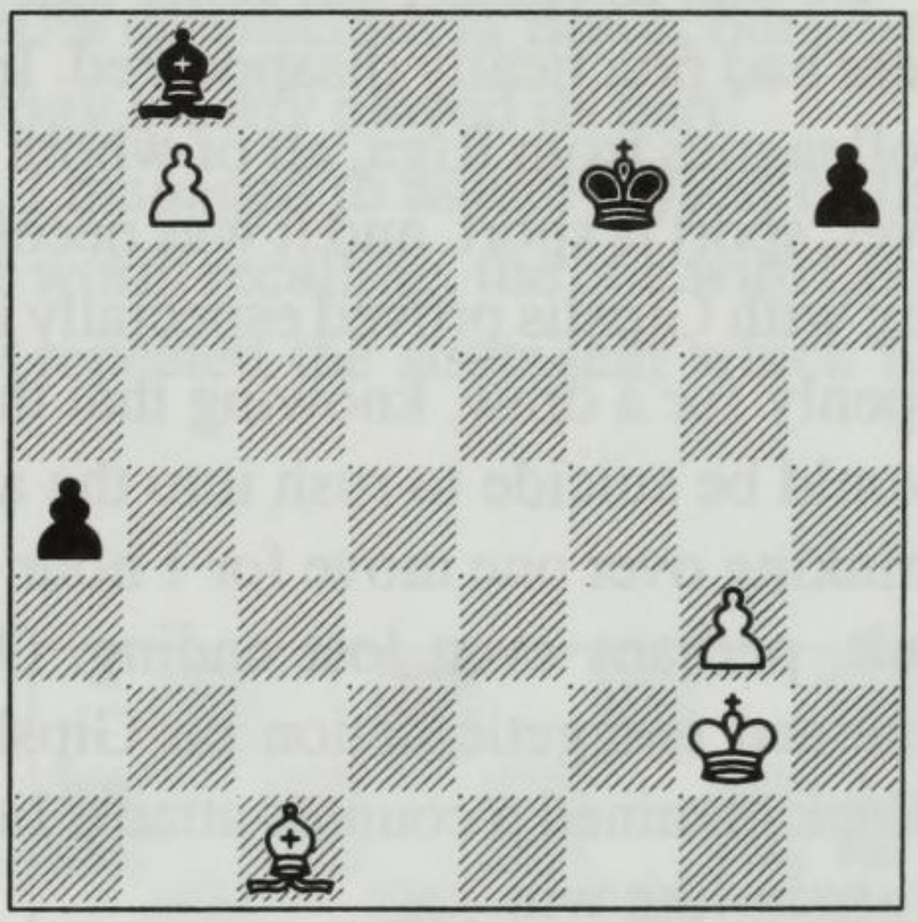
The year was concluded at home, in Riga, by the Team Championship of the Country, only this time for adults. Here for the first time I won against a Grandmaster, the USSR Champion Yuri Averbakh. After this, still a candidate master, I

drew a couple of games, and then received notification that I was a master. This change evidently had a bad effect on me, for towards the end I lost more games than I won or drew.

1955 was notable for my debut in the USSR Individual Championship. Before this there was, as usual, the Latvian Championship, but I was somehow living in anticipation of greater things, and regarded it as just an ordinary tournament. Besides, the first-year student was not I, but Gipslis, and this explains everything! Therefore in the USSR Team Championship – there is no longer any need to distinguish between Youth and Adult, as my chess youth was over – I played on board 2, and the tournament was the first in which I went through without a defeat.

JOURNALIST. *Were you pleased by this?*

CHESS PLAYER. I was always indifferent to it. What did please me was the fact that I saved a very difficult ending against Lipnitsky.



**Lipnitsky – Tal**
*USSR Team Ch, Voroshilovgrad 1955*

**41 ♗f4 ♗a7 42 ♗e3 ♗b8 43 ♗f4 ♗a7 44 ♗c1** After 44 b8♕ ♗xb8 45 ♗xb8 a3 46 ♗e5 ♔e6 47 ♗c3 ♔f5 48 ♔h3 h5!! an analogous position to that in the game arises: Black does not get into zugzwang! **44...♔e6 45 ♔f3 ♔d7 46 ♗f4 a3 47 b8♕ ♗xb8 48 ♗xb8 ♔e6 49 ♔f4 ♔f6 50 ♗e5+ ♔g6 51 ♗a1 a2 52 ♗b2 h5 53 ♗a1 ♔h6 ½-½**

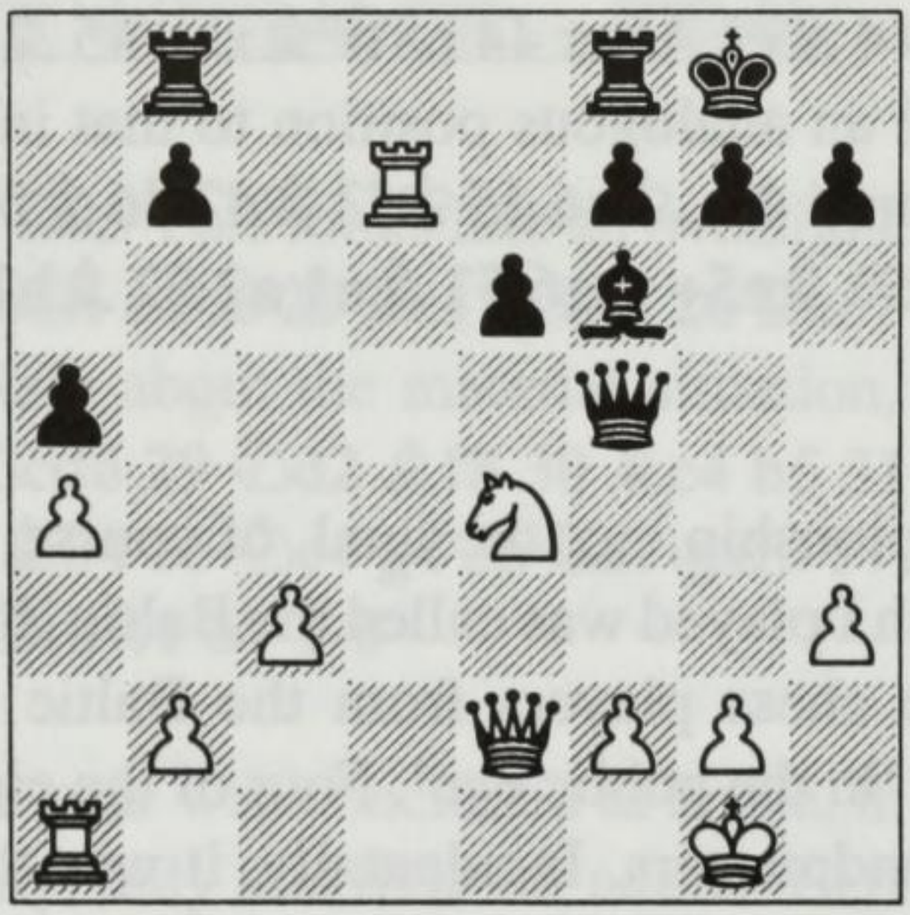
Then came the USSR Individual Championship, not the final, of course, but only the quarter-final. The 'quarter' in which I played was called the Baltic Zonal Tournament, and was strong enough: the chess players from the Baltic and Byelorussia have always been, as they say, 'in the public eye'. Four of the eighteen competitors subsequently became Grandmasters. Incidentally, it was there that for the first time in the All-Union arena (in the Latvian Championship it had

already happened once) I played a tournament game with a representative of the fairer (also sometimes called the weaker) sex: the USSR Ladies' Champion Kira Zvorikina scored one point; fortunately, it was not against me that she won.

From the creative point of view, the tournament began very productively for me. Even all the draws – and in the first seven rounds I had as many as five – were at times simply head-spinning. Then came a decline and two highly annoying defeats, one of which occurred in the game with Lein, due to an incident which for me was atypical. He had very little time remaining, and, thinking over the problem of how to realise my advantage most quickly, I forgot all about the clock. Suddenly I saw the controllers approaching. 'What, have they never seen time-trouble?', I thought, and accidentally glancing at the clock, noticed that my flag was about to fall, while Lein's minutes remained intact. In some 40 seconds I succeeded in making all 15 moves to the control, but in my haste the path I followed was not at all the one over which I had been thinking for so long.

Be that as it may, but some 6 or 7 rounds before the finish my chances of success had practically disappeared. In addition, my next three games were with my colleagues from Riga, all of whom were above me in the tournament table. However, sport is sport, and it was necessary to 'step over their dead bodies'. The ending with Gipslis proved especially interesting. From the start my opponent played openly for a draw, knowing that this would not satisfy me. What was I to do? It would be suicide to rush into the attack against White's solid position, and after thinking over one move for 1 hour 40 minutes (!!), I voluntarily went into a difficult, perhaps even lost ending. On the other hand, the resulting position demanded energetic action on Gipslis' part, but he was unable to re-adjust, and Black obtained a counter-attack. In the adjourned position I succeeded in finding a study-like win.

*B*



**Gipslis – Tal**
*USSR Ch quarter-final, Vilnius 1955*

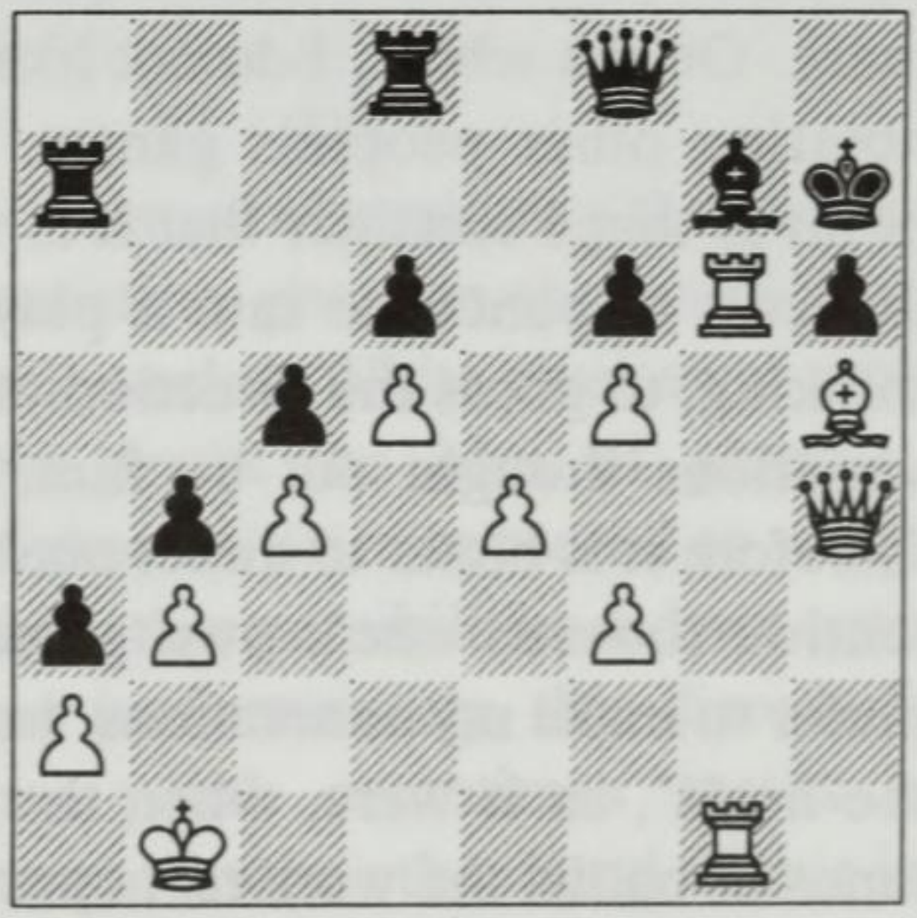
**18...♕e5 19 ♘xf6+ gxf6 20 ♕xe5 fxe5 21 ♖e1 f6 22 c4 ♖f7 23 ♖ed1 ♖c8 24 b3 ♖c7 25 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 26 ♖d6 ♔f7 27 ♔f1 f5 28 g3 ♔f6 29 ♖b6 f4 30 gxf4 exf4 31 ♔e2 ♔f5 32 f3 ♔e5 33 ♔d3 ♖d7+ 34 ♔c3 ♔f5 35 ♖b5+ e5 36 ♖xa5 ♖d1 37 ♖d5 ♖h1 38 a5 ♖xh3 39 ♖d3 ♖g3 40 ♔d2 ♖g2+ 41 ♔e1 ♖b2 42 c5 h5 43 ♔f1 h4 44 ♖c3 h3 45 ♔g1 e4 46 a6 e3 47 axb7 ♖b1+ 48 ♔h2 e2 49 ♖e3** White is mated after 49 b8♕ ♖h1+. **49...fxe3 50 b8♕ ♖h1+ 51 ♔xh1 e1♕+ 52 ♔h2 ♕f2+ 53 ♔xh3 ♕xf3+ 54 ♔h2 e2 55 ♕f8+ ♔e4 56 ♕e8+ ♔d3 57 ♕b5+ ♔c3 0-1**

Following this I managed to win a couple more games, and in the end everything turned out well.

At home, in Riga, the Semi-final proved a great surprise to me. Grandmaster Boleslavsky was playing there, as well as strong and experienced masters such as Furman and Korchnoi. Against the latter I had a considerably inferior individual score. Trying to 'win one back', I lost to him from a better position on the eve of the Semi-final in the Russian Federation-Latvia Match, and then again in the Semi-final. Up till then I had scored roughly 50% against him as Black, but would systematically lose to him as White. Psychology clearly played its part!

Then, in such a strong tournament as this, I managed to assure myself of first place with one round to go. Several games are worth recalling, the one with Lebedev, for instance, where I more consciously repeated the stratagem which had proved itself in the game with Gipslis.

Here is a more 'traditional' game:




**Tal – Solovyev**
*USSR Ch semi-final, Riga 1955*

**40 ♖xg7+ ♖xg7 41 ♗g6+ ♔g8 42 ♕xh6 ♕e7 43 ♗h7+** To see whether Black will move his king to f8, when 44 ♖g6 decides. **43...♔h8 44 ♗g6+ ♔g8 45 ♔c1** White's attacking pieces are ideally placed, but he cannot make progress without a pawn breakthrough in the centre; it is for this reason that the king advances.

**45...♖d7 46 ♖h1 ♔f8 47 f4 ♖c7** 47...♕xe4 fails to 48 ♕h8+. **48 ♔d2 ♖d7 49 ♔d3 ♖c7 50 ♖e1 ♔g8 51 e5 dxe5 52 fxe5 fxe5 53 ♖h1**, and in view of the variation 53...♔f8 54 ♕h8+ ♖g8 55 f6 ♕d6 56 ♕h6+, **Black resigned (1-0).**

Game 1

**Tal (12 years) – Zilber (15 years)**

*Riga 1949*

French Defence

Every experienced chess player (and I, unfortunately, have every right to be considered one) is familiar with that strange feeling which he has when he sits down to annotate his early games. On the one hand, he plays through them with a sort of tenderness, just like an adult watching a film taken by his parents of his early years or even months, or looking through the fading photographs from a family album; on the other hand, whether he wants to or not, on almost every move his hand all but stretches out to attach a question mark. On the whole, I do not like annotating other people's games. The point is that I consider that it is very difficult to penetrate into a player's thinking, to guess the direction of the variations thought out by him, and therefore it is better to direct one's attention towards one's own games. I prefer to make my annotations 'hot on the heels', as it were, when the fortunes of battle, the worries, hopes and disappointments are still sufficiently fresh in my mind. Much as I would like to, I cannot say this about these few games which will be given below. In fact, if the annotator should begin to use phrases of the type: 'in reply to ... I had worked out the following variation...', the reader will rightly say 'Grandmaster, you are showing off', since the 'oldest' of these games is now more than 25 years old, and even the 'newest' more than 20. Therefore, I would ask you not to regard the following 'stylised' annotations too severely.

The game given below was played in the Championship of the Riga Palace of Pioneers, just at the time when the 'Golden Age' of young Latvian chess players was beginning. If I remember correctly, A. Gipslis and Y. Klovans, who were to become quite well known masters within a few years, played in the Palace, while I was making my usual unsuccessful attempt to obtain first category rating. On looking through the following game, it will be easy to see why this attempt was unsuccessful.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **e6** |
| **2** | **d4** | **d5** |
| **3** | **♘d2** | **c5** |
| **4** | **exd5** | |

Up to this point the game has developed in similar fashion to many of the Karpov-Korchnoi encounters in 1974. However, I don't wish to claim ...

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **4** | **...** | **♕xd5** |
| **5** | **♘gf3** | **♘c6** |

**6 ♗c4 ♕h5**

Modern theory takes a sceptical view of this manoeuvre. However, in the present case I don't consider that any detailed analysis of the opening system is necessary.

**7 dxc5!**

This continuation is possibly the strongest rejoinder. If we use the 'retrospective method', it can be supposed that the white player (who at that time already had a reputation as a tactician) simply did not care for the prospect of the queens being exchanged at some stage (after the capture on d4).

**7 ... ♗xc5**

**8 ♘e4 ♘ge7**

Because of the unpleasant threat of the knight's intrusion on d6, Black cannot keep his bishop.

**9 ♗g5!**

I like this move even now; it emphasises the bad position of the black queen, while keeping the bishop under attack.

**9 ... ♕g4**

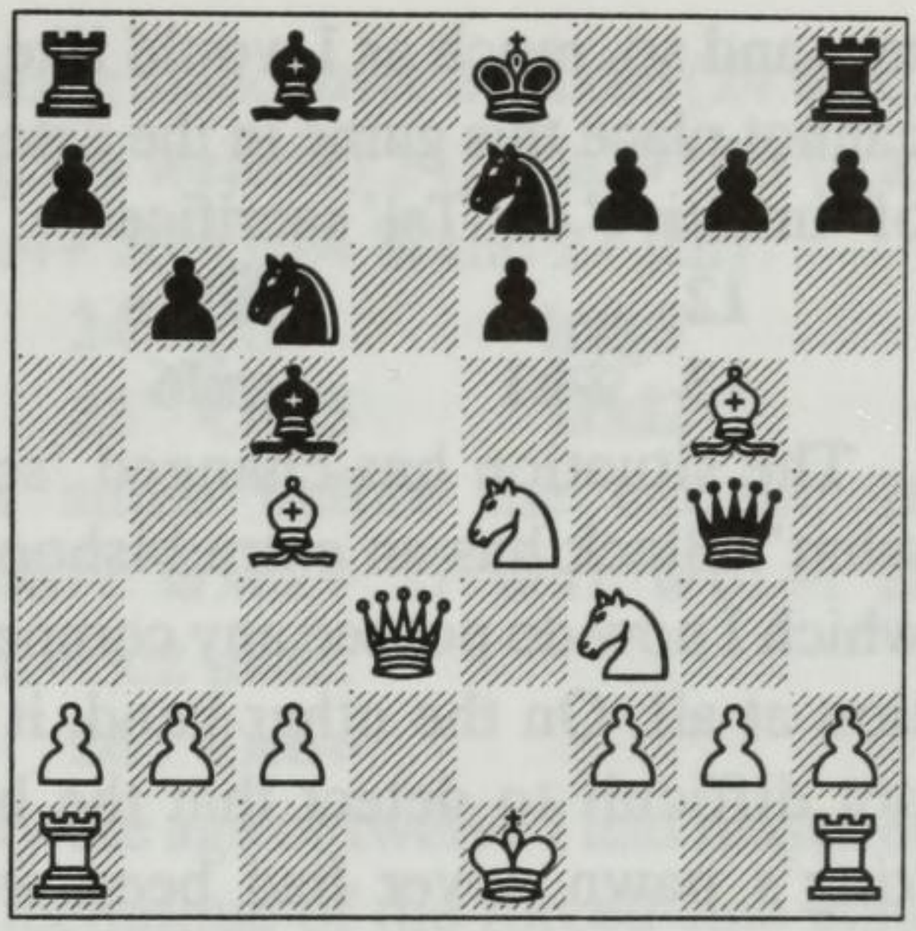
While there is no denying that this is a clever reply, 9...b6 was nevertheless the lesser evil, although even in this case after 10 ♘xc5 bxc5 11 ♕d6 Black's position is unenviable.

**10 ♕d3 b6** *(D)*

The inclusion of the moves 10...♘b4 11 ♕e2 would not help Black.

**11 0-0-0??**

Such a critical assessment is by no means a sign of the sceptical attitude of a venerable Grandmaster to his young inexperienced namesake. If I




had had to annotate this game 25 years ago, the verdict would have been the same. It is difficult to believe that White should miss the chance to win the game immediately using 'arithmetic': 11 h3 ♕f5 (11...♕xg2 12 ♖h2) 12 g4 ♕g6 13 ♘h4 ♘e5 14 ♗b5+ or 14 ♕e2.

**11 ... 0-0**

The opponent is still blissfully unaware. He could have saved his queen by playing 11...h6.

**12 ♗f6**

Instead of capturing the queen (the variation given in the previous note still works), White gives away a piece. No doubt the idea of placing the bishop *en prise* appeared so tempting that other possibilities did not occur to me (unfortunately, this disease from my youth sometimes recurs even now). On the other hand, if this is the case, then the question arises as to why did White not play ♗f6 a move earlier, when at any rate it was less risky. I am absolutely sure that my opponent's reply came as a surprise to

me, and so, much as I would like to, I cannot place this game in the category of 'intuitive' or 'Tal' sacrifices.

**12 ... ♕f4+**

**13 ♔b1 gxf6**

The situation has changed 'somewhat'. Black has an extra bishop, for which I now do not see any compensation at all. On the other hand, it was not difficult to detect that the black king's pawn cover had been weakened. White continues as if nothing has happened.

**14 g3 ♕h6**

**15 g4 ♕f4**

The most logical. On this square the queen is excellently placed. In reply to 15...♔h8 I would, of course, have continued 16 h4.

**16 g5 fxg5**

It was hardly good to open the g-file for White. 16...f5 17 ♘f6+ ♔h8 was a much simpler way of defending, after which spectacular moves by the knight on f3 (so as to move the queen to h3) fail to 18...♕xg5, while in reply to 18 ♘h5 there is the simple defence 18...♕c7 19 ♕c3+ e5.

**17 ♘fxg5**

With the concrete threat of 18 ♘f6+.

**17 ... ♘g6**

**18 h4**

Now the threats to the black king have to be taken seriously.

**18 ... ♘b4**

Black's striving for active play is understandable, but this merely helps White to transfer his queen to a more dangerous position. 18...♘ce5 19 ♕c3 f6! (19...h6 20 h5 hxg5 21 hxg6 ♕xe4 22 ♕h3 ♕h4 23 ♕c3 or 23 ♕g2 is less clear) would have given Black the chance to consolidate his position, while keeping an adequate material advantage.

**19 ♕h3 e5**

After this move Black's king is really in danger. In the first place, the diagonal is opened for White's bishop, and in addition the black pieces are denied the use of the important e5-square. The fact that Black's light-squared bishop is activated, is, in the given case, a less significant factor. 19...♘e5 was much stronger.

**20 ♕g2 ♗f5**

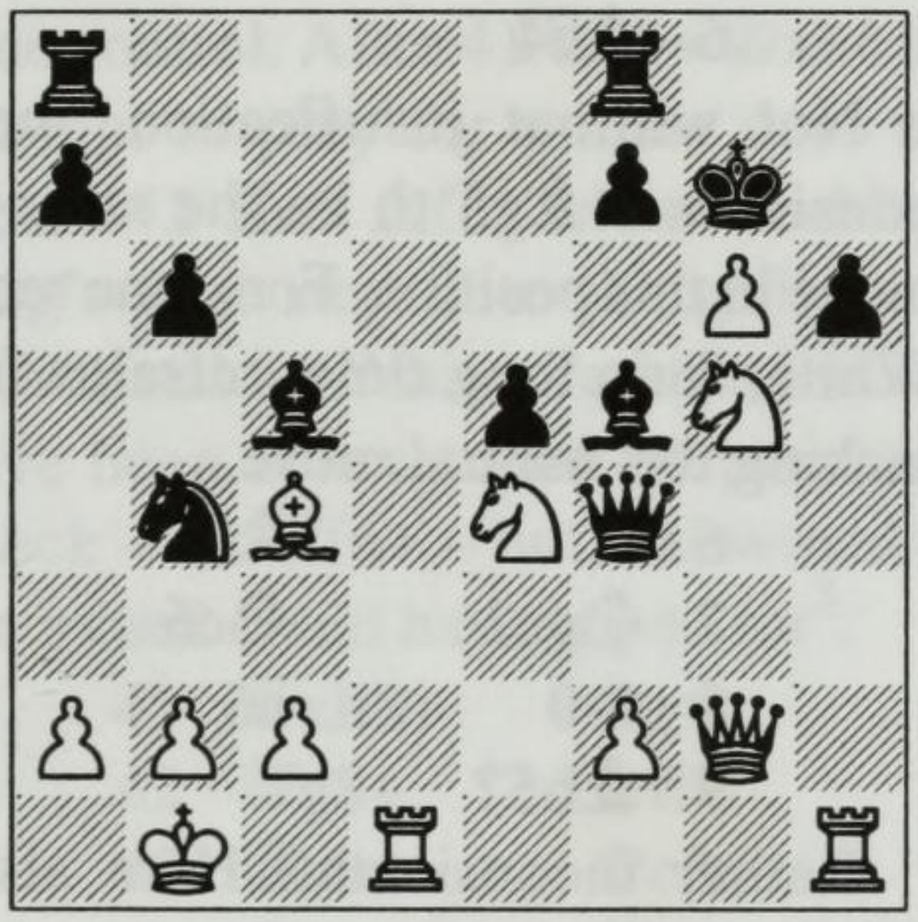
With his last few moves Black has significantly complicated his task. Underestimating the enemy's threats was a sin of Zilber's even in youth. It appears that now was the last chance for Black to move his king away. After 20...♔h8 the advantage is still with Black. In this case White evidently does best to continue 21 ♘xf7+ (the following spectacular line fails: 21 h5 ♘h4 22 ♖xh4 ♕xh4 23 ♖d8 ♗e6!) 21...♖xf7 22 ♗xf7 ♗b7 (the attempt at counter-attack 22...♕xf7 23 ♘xc5 is insufficient) 23 ♗xg6 hxg6 24 ♖he1 with a double-edged position.

**21 h5 ♔g7**

It is difficult to say what Black had overlooked. Perhaps he had intended 21...♘h4 and noticed at the last moment that it was refuted simply by 22 ♖xh4 ♕xh4 23 ♘f3+; perhaps he was

planning a counter-attack, but had underestimated White's 23rd move. Here he should first have eliminated the white knight at e4, although in this case White has an undisputed initiative after the possible 21...♗xe4 22 ♘xe4 ♔g7 23 hxg6 hxg6 24 ♖d7[1] ♕f5 25 ♗xf7! (unfortunately, less convincing is the spectacular 25 ♗e6!? ♕xe6 26 ♖h7+ ♔xh7! 27 ♘g5+ ♔h6 28 ♘xe6 fxe6, but not 26...♔g8 27 ♕h2 with inevitable mate).

**22 hxg6 h6** *(D)*



**23 ♗xf7!**

I was no doubt very pleased with myself at this moment. Clearly both knights are immune. The main threat is 24 ♖xh6.

**23 ... ♖xf7**

In reply to 23...♕g4, 24 ♕h2 is the easiest way to win. 23...♘xc2 would perhaps have set White the most difficult problems. It is hard to be sure that I would definitely have found the winning manoeuvre 24 ♖xh6 (24 ♔xc2 ♕xg5 is weaker) 24...♘a3+! 25 bxa3 ♗xe4+ 26 ♘xe4 ♕xh6 27 ♖h1.

**24 gxf7 hxg5**

**25 ♘xg5 ♕xf2**

A smile before the curtain: 26 ♕xa8?? ♕xc2+ 27 ♔a1 ♕b1+! 28 ♖xb1 ♘c2 mate.

**26 ♘e6+**

By the age of twelve I had mastered the technique of the forced-line mate to a sufficient degree. No further commentary is required.

**26 ... ♔xf7**
**27 ♕g7+ ♔xe6**
**28 ♖h6+ ♗g6**
**29 ♕xg6+ ♔e7**
**30 ♖h7+ ♔f8**
**31 ♕g7+ ♔e8**
**32 ♕d7+ ♔f8**
**33 ♖h8 mate**

Game 2

**Tal – Klasup**

*Riga Championship 1952*

Dutch Defence

'Lucky Tal' – I have often been called this by journalists. It must be admitted that there is a certain justification for such a nickname. After an event, certain players like to indulge in an unusual form of statistics; they count up the points that stand alongside their names in the tournament table, and also those that could have been. As a rule, the number 'lost' is significantly

---

1 24 c3 ♘c6 25 ♗d5 ♖ac8 26 ♘xc5 winning a piece is simpler.

higher than the number 'found'. I cannot say this about myself. Very often carelessness or indifferent technique has prevented me from achieving victory in positions which one can confidently regard as being won, but there have also been a number of examples of a different sort. From my very first steps in chess I have been an 'optimist'. I think that the reader will already have realised this, after playing through my game with Zilber. The example given below is of the same type. On this occasion, it is true, the ratings of the players were higher – both had first category. Moreover, if one looks ahead, the following games come to mind: the 3rd and 4th games with Smyslov in the 1959 Candidates Tournament, the 3rd and 17th games from the first match with Botvinnik (incidentally, the second of these is the most similar to the game which the reader can now see), and the game with Portisch in the 1964 Amsterdam Interzonal. This list could easily be extended if one so desired.

There is no doubt that my opponents in these games had every justification for complaining about their bad luck. I hope, however, that I in some way 'contributed' to this bad luck.

**1 d4 f5**
**2 e4 fxe4**
**3 ♘c3 ♘f6**
**4 f3**

My opponent was very fond of accepting pawn sacrifices. Thus he regularly chose the McCutcheon Variation of the French Defence. He would capture the pawn on c3 and be prepared to defend for a long time for the sake of it. In view of this, White's choice of opening seems to me to be unfortunate, especially since, as is shown by the further course of the game, he has no feel for this variation.

**4 ... d5**

A characteristic analogy. At roughly this time V. Korchnoi was not infrequently trying to vindicate this idea.

**5 fxe4 dxe4**
**6 ♗c4**

Not without justification, theory considers 6 ♗g5 to be the strongest move in this position. For some reason White, for a long time, refrains from making this natural move.

**6 ... ♗f5**
**7 ♘ge2 ♘c6**
**8 0-0 e6**
**9 ♗b5?**

Rather inconsistent. Here also 9 ♗g5 would have led to a position where White should soon have been able to win back his pawn.

**9 ... a6**
**10 ♗a4 ♕d7**

Defending his bishop in view of the possibility of d5, and preparing to castle long.

**11 ♗g5**

After a noticeable delay.

**11 ... 0-0-0**
**12 ♔h1 ♗e7**

White does not appear to have any compensation for the pawn, but by

41...♕d5 42 g3+ (it is surprising, but White does not win after 42 ♕f6+? ♕g5 43 ♕xh8+ ♕h5 44 ♕f6+[1] ♕g5 45 g3+ ♔h5 46 ♖e5 ♖d2+ with perpetual check; if 45 ♖e5?, then Black wins by 45...♖h1+!) 42...♔h5 43 ♖e5+; 41...♖f1 42 ♕g6!![2]; 41...♕f1 (the most stubborn) 42 ♕xh8+ ♔g5 43 ♕g7+ ♔h5 (it is easy to see that this is the only move) 44 ♔g3!! ♗f5 45 ♖e8.

And yet Klasup could have done better by playing 40...♕g8!!, a move which would have been very difficult to find in the few seconds before the time control. After 41 ♕e5+ ♔xh4 the attempt to play for a mate does not work: 42 ♖e3 ♗f3! when the black king's first step onto the g-file will prove fatal for White. Perhaps I would have been able to draw by perpetual check – 42 ♕f6+ – but that would be the most I could have hoped for[3].

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **41** | **♕xh8+** | **♔g6** |
| **42** | **♕g8+** | **♔f5** |
| **43** | **♕c8+** | **♔e5** |
| **44** | **♕xg4** | **♕xg4** |
| **45** | **♖xg4** | |

The game concluded as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **45** | **...** | **♖d2** |
| **46** | **♖g5+** | **♔f4** |
| **47** | **♖xc5** | **♖xc2** |
| **48** | **♖c6** | **♔g4** |
| **49** | **♖c4+** | **♔h5** |
| **50** | **a4** | **♖d2** |
| **51** | **♔h3** | **♖d3+** |
| **52** | **g3** | **♖d6** |
| **53** | **a5** | **♖d5** |
| **54** | **g4+** | **♔g6** |
| **55** | **♖c6+** | **♔f7** |
| **56** | **♖xa6** | **♖d3+** |
| **57** | **♔g2** | **♖xc3** |
| **58** | **h5** | **♔g7** |
| **59** | **♖b6** | **♖a3** |
| **60** | **a6** | **♔f7** |
| **61** | **♔h2** | **♔g7** |
| **62** | **g5** | **♖a5** |
| **63** | **♖b7+** | **♔g8** |
| **64** | **a7** | **1-0** |

Game 3

**Tal – Pasman**

*Latvian Championship 1953*

Sicilian Defence

The game given below was played in the tournament which brought me my first really important success. There was always a very tense struggle for the Latvian Championship, and to take first place in it was a far from easy matter. Running ahead a little, I remember how in 1958 the twice Champion of the USSR M. Tal had to be satisfied with third place in the Championship of the Republic. However, in the 1953 Championship I was the undisputed favourite. This had nothing to do with chess strength – at that time I had first category rating, while there was one master and about

---

1 44 ♕g7! wins at once, e.g. 44...♕g5 45 g3+ ♔h5 46 ♕h7+ ♕h6 47 ♖e5+.

2 Now 42...♖f2 appears an adequate defence.

3 After 42...♔h5 I don't see any hope of perpetual check.

10 candidate masters in the tournament, or, to express it in the modern way, my individual rating was far from being the highest. Simply, commencing in 1951, there was an unwritten tradition in our Championships that the winner should be a first-year student. In 1951 it was M. Pasman, in 1952 Y. Klyavin, and in 1953 I was the only first-year taking part. Following the same tradition, the next year Y. Klovans took first place, and then A. Gipslis. I succeeded in repeating my achievement in the Championship only 12 years later, when the tradition had been forgotten, and young players did not in general reach the final of the Championship of the Republic.

My opponent was one of the strongest players in Latvia, and had already successfully competed in the USSR Championship Semi-final. M. Pasman likes to play to a clearly defined positional plan, and so it was with particular pleasure that I strove in this game for tactical complications, reckoning that only in this way could I hope for success.

**1 e4 c5**
**2 ♘f3 d6**
**3 d4 cxd4**
**4 ♘xd4 ♘f6**
**5 ♘c3 a6**

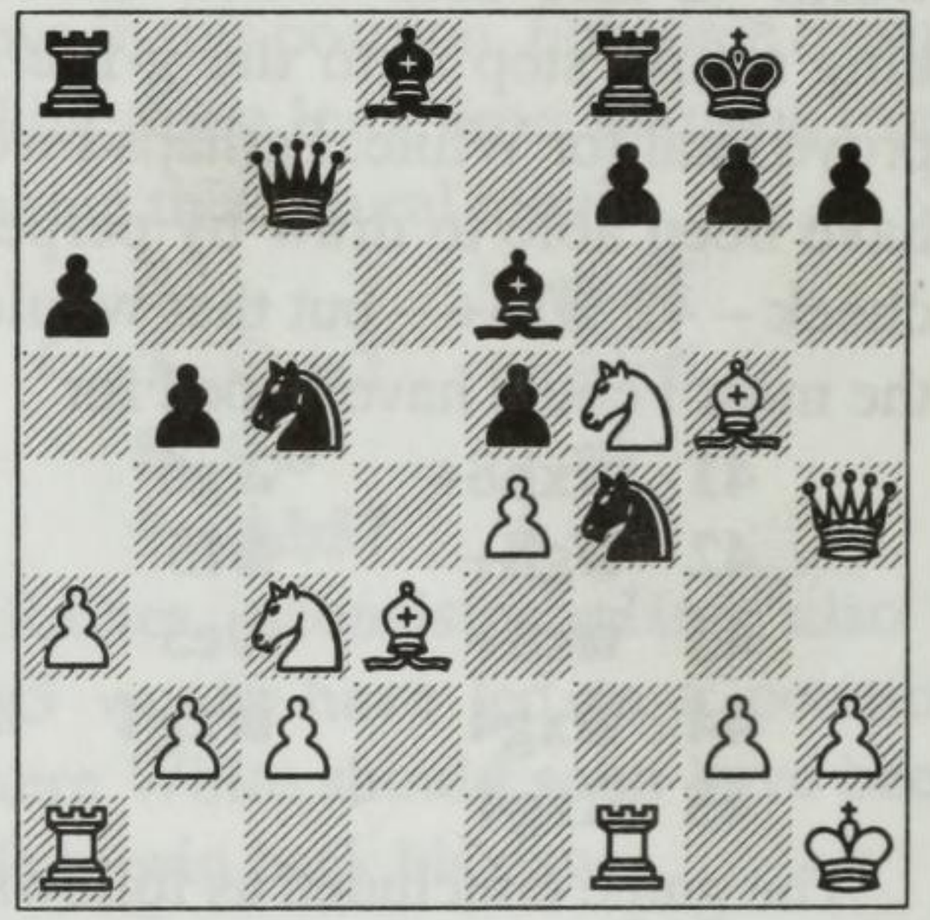
At that time the Najdorf System was only just coming into fashion.

**6 f4**

This continuation was one of the most popular at that time. Now, for no particular reason, it is played rather rarely, although it brings White a high enough percentage of wins. I liked this move for the main reason that in the 1952 USSR Championship Semi-final in Riga (M. Pasman played in this tournament) a spectacular game was played. I am unable to resist the temptation to give it in full.

**G. Ravinsky-G. Ilivitsky**

6 f4 e5 7 ♘f3 ♕c7 8 ♗d3 ♘bd7 9 0-0 b5 10 a3 ♗e7 11 ♔h1 0-0 12 fxe5 dxe5 13 ♘h4 ♗d8 14 ♕e1 ♘c5 15 ♗g5 ♗e6 16 ♘f5 ♘h5 17 ♕h4 ♘f4 *(D)*




18 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♖xf4 exf4 20 ♕h6+ ♔g8 21 ♗f6!! ♗xf6 22 e5 ♘xd3 23 exf6 ♘f2+ 24 ♔g1 ♘h3+ 25 ♔f1 ♗c4+ 26 ♘e2 1-0.

After the game the opinion was expressed that Ravinsky's combination could have been refuted by means of 18...♘cxd3, but I did not agree with this point of view (either because of 19 ♗f6 or more likely 19 ♕g3, I don't

remember), and had a burning desire to try this out.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **6** | **...** | **e5** |
| **7** | **♘f3** | **♘bd7** |
| **8** | **♗d3** | |

White tries to reach the desired position, and so ignores the possibility of 8 ♗c4.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **8** | **...** | **♗e7** |
| **9** | **0-0** | **0-0** |
| **10** | **♔h1** | **b5** |
| **11** | **a3** | **♕c7** |
| **12** | **fxe5** | **dxe5** |
| **13** | **♘h4** | **♘c5** |

Alas, M. Pasman does not wish to become involved in a theoretical discussion. Now, in reply to 14 ♘f5, Black is by no means bound to retreat his bishop to d8, but can obtain a comfortable game by 14...♗xf5 15 ♖xf5 ♖ad8. So I had to think for myself.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **14** | **♗g5** | **♕d8** |

15 ♗xf6 and 16 ♘d5 was threatened. 14...♗e6 would lead, after 15 ♘f5, to the loss of a tempo (or to a return to familiar paths), while 14...♖d8 would weaken the f7-square.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **15** | **♘f5** | **♗xf5** |
| **16** | **♖xf5** | **♘fd7** |

Clearly I was not at all afraid of 16...♘xd3 which rids White of his bad bishop, and strengthens his pawn on e4. However, even now Black encounters certain difficulties, although he succeeds in parrying the direct threats to his king.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **17** | **♗xe7** | **♕xe7** |
| **18** | **♘d5** | **♕d6** |
| **19** | **♕g4** | |

White simply throws his pieces at the enemy kingside. More in the spirit of the position was play on the queenside: 19 b4! ♘e6 (19...♘xd3 20 ♕xd3 and in view of the threat of 21 ♘f6+ Black cannot prevent the advance of the c-pawn) 20 c4 bxc4 21 ♗xc4 with pressure for White.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **19** | **...** | **g6** |
| **20** | **♖af1** | **f6** |
| **21** | **h4?** | |

More cautious, and stronger, was 21 b4 ♘xd3 (if 21...♔h8 then 22 ♖5f2! but not 22 ♖5f3? f5!) 22 cxd3 ♔h8 23 ♖5f2 f5 24 ♕h4 with a minimal advantage for White. I was attracted, however, by the idea of sacrificing two pieces. As became clear 20 years later, this idea was incorrect. Events now develop by force.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **21** | **...** | **♔h8** |
| **22** | **♖5f3** | **f5** |
| **23** | **exf5** | |

It is easy to see that White has nothing better.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **23** | **...** | **♕xd5!** |

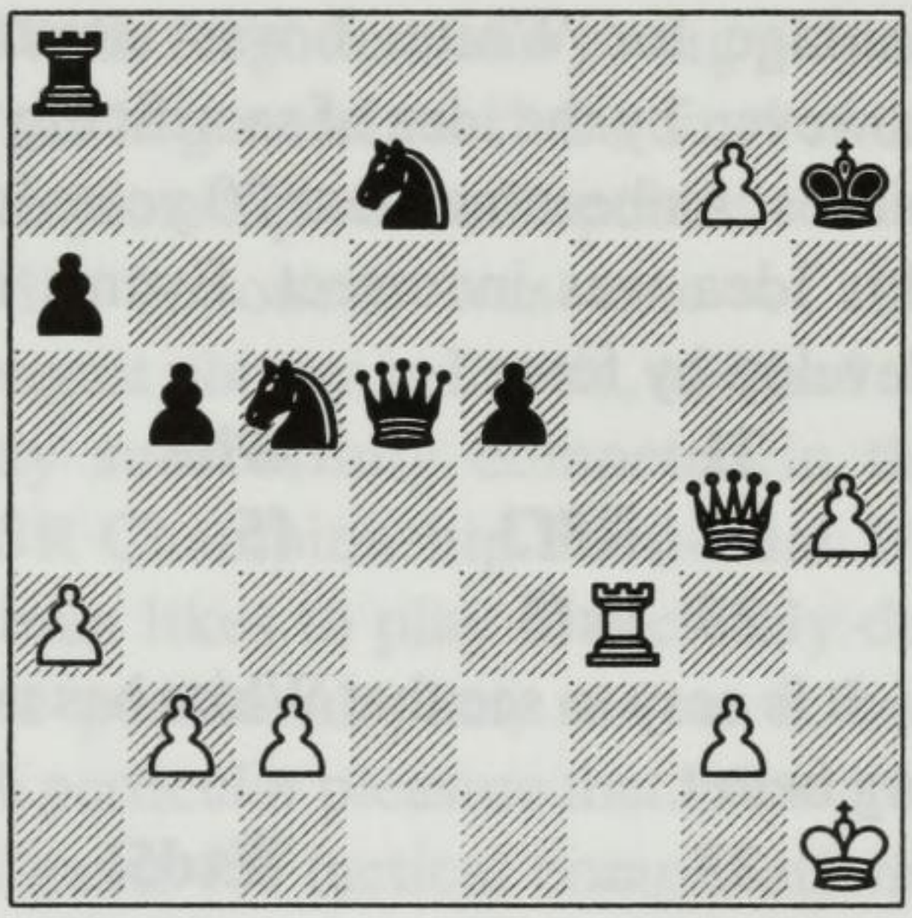
The other defensive possibility, the intermediate capture 23...gxf5, which was apparently equally good, would have been met by a decisive rejoinder: 24 ♗xf5 ♕xd5 25 ♗xh7! ♖xf3 (not, of course, 25...♔xh7 because of mate in two moves by 26 ♕h5+ and 27 ♖g3) 26 ♖xf3 ♔xh7 (in reply to 26...e4 27 ♖f5 ♕e6, 28 ♗g6, or even 28 ♗g8, is very unpleasant) 27 ♕h5+ ♔g7 28 ♖f5! and it is extremely difficult for Black to meet the threat of 29 ♕g4+.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **24** | **fxg6** | **♖xf3** |

In view of the threat of 25 g7+, Black has no time to capture the momentarily enlivened bishop. In his turn White has not time to capture the enemy rook straight away, since in this case he loses after 25 ♖xf3 e4 26 ♖f7 exd3.

**25 g7+ ♔g8**
**26 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7**
**27 ♖xf3** *(D)*

The attempt at perpetual check fails (to be honest, I did not even consider this during the game): 27 ♕h5+ ♔xg7 28 ♕g5+ ♔f7! 29 ♖xf3+ ♔e8.



*W*

This is the position that White had in mind when he made his 21st move. It seemed to me that it would not be easy for Black to co-ordinate the actions of his knights (at any rate, in the game Pasman did not succeed in doing this). Now, for instance, 27...♕d1+ 28 ♔h2 ♕d6 fails to 29 g8♕+ ♖xg8 30 ♖f7+. 27...e4 28 ♖f5 is also bad. The refutation of White's idea lies in the move 27...♕e6!. Now both 28 ♕h5+ ♕h6!, and 28 ♖f5 (it was evidently this that I was counting on) 28...♘f6! 29 ♕g5 ♘ce4 are equally hopeless for White. Pasman misses this opportunity, and the tension is maintained.

**27 ... ♘e4**

This takes g3 away from the rook, but leaves other squares free ...

**28 h5 ♘df6**
**29 ♕g6+ ♔g8**
**30 h6**

A rather curious position has arisen. Black is in an unusual form of zugzwang: his knights are tied to defending each other, while his queen is forced to guard the square f7. Here Black should probably have forced a draw by continuing 30...♘h7, when White has nothing better than 31 ♖f8+ ♖xf8 (31...♘xf8 32 gxf8♕+ ♔xf8 33 ♕g7+ ♔e8 34 h7 ♕d1+ 35 ♔h2 ♕h5+ leads to the same result) 32 gxf8♕+ ♔xf8 33 ♕xh7 with a probable draw.

Playing for a win proves fatal for Black.

**30 ... ♖a7**
**31 ♔h2!**

After this quiet move, Black has only one defence, which is not easy to find: 31...♖a8! 32 ♖h3 ♘h7 33 ♖d3 ♕b7 34 ♕e6+ ♕f7 35 ♕c6 ♕f4+ with a draw. It should be added that Black was in severe time-trouble.

**31 ... ♖e7**
**32 ♖h3**

Destroying the co-ordination of the black pieces.

**32 ... ♘h7**
**33 ♖d3 ♕a8**

**34 ♕xe4!**

The pawns prove to be stronger than the pieces!

**34 ... ♕xe4**

34...♖e8 was more tenacious.

**35 ♖d8+ ♔f7**
**36 g8♕+ ♔f6**
**37 ♖d6+ ♔f5**
**38 ♕g6+ ♔f4**
**39 g3+ ♔e3**
**40 ♖d3+ ♕xd3**

**1-0**

Game 4

**Birbrager – Tal**

*USSR Youth Team Championship, Kharkov 1953*

Modern Benoni Defence

There are chess players whose opening tastes are noted for their exceptional constancy. Thus, for instance, in preparing for a game with Fischer (up till 1972), one could have no doubt that, in reply to 1 e4, the Najdorf Variation of the Sicilian Defence would definitely be played. This was confirmed by literally all the American Grandmaster's games, beginning with childhood competitions. Karpov, from his early years, has had a marked antipathy to Indian set-ups, and in reply to 1 e4 normally chooses 1...e5 (more rarely 1...c5). Other players, such as Spassky, Korchnoi and Larsen, regularly vary their openings as they think fit. The game given below is one of my first attempts at playing a complicated opening system, with which subsequently certain theorists even associated my name. Up till 1953 I normally adopted the Slav Defence, the Nimzo-Indian and the King's Indian, less frequently the Dutch, and very rarely the Grünfeld. As far as I remember, in one of the issues of *Shakhmaty v SSSR* at that time, the game Boleslavsky-Nezhmetdinov from the Championship of the Russian Republic appeared, in which Black treated the system with 2...c5 in very interesting fashion. This game appealed to me, and I began occasionally, and then fairly regularly, to adopt it in tournaments.

**1 d4 ♘f6**
**2 c4 c5**
**3 d5 e6**
**4 ♘c3 exd5**
**5 cxd5 d6**

It is interesting that I have played against I. Birbrager three times, and three times this system has appeared. Two years later, in the USSR Team Championship (this time for adults), the Uzbekistan player played the opening very accurately, and I think that it was he who introduced a continuation in one of the topical variations, which is even nowadays considered to be the strongest. A further 10 years passed, and once again, also in the USSR Team Championship, I succeeded in winning a game which was not without theoretical interest (though not as a result of the opening). To return to our first encounter, it should be noted

that at that time the theory of this variation was at an embryonic stage, and so there is nothing surprising in the numerous errors made by both players.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **6** | **e4** | **g6** |
| **7** | **♘f3** | **♗g7** |
| **8** | **♗d3** | **0-0** |
| **9** | **0-0** | **♘a6** |

It was in this way that R. Nezhmetdinov developed his queen's knight (to be fair, in a different position). Nowadays it has been known for a long time that Black obtains a comfortable game by continuing 9...a6 10 a4 ♗g4, exchanging off White's potentially strong knight (which could otherwise move to d2 and then c4). In particular, this has been confirmed by several of my games (e.g. Mititelu-Tal, Reykjavik 1957 and Donner-Tal, Zurich 1959).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **10** | **♘d2** | **♘b4** |

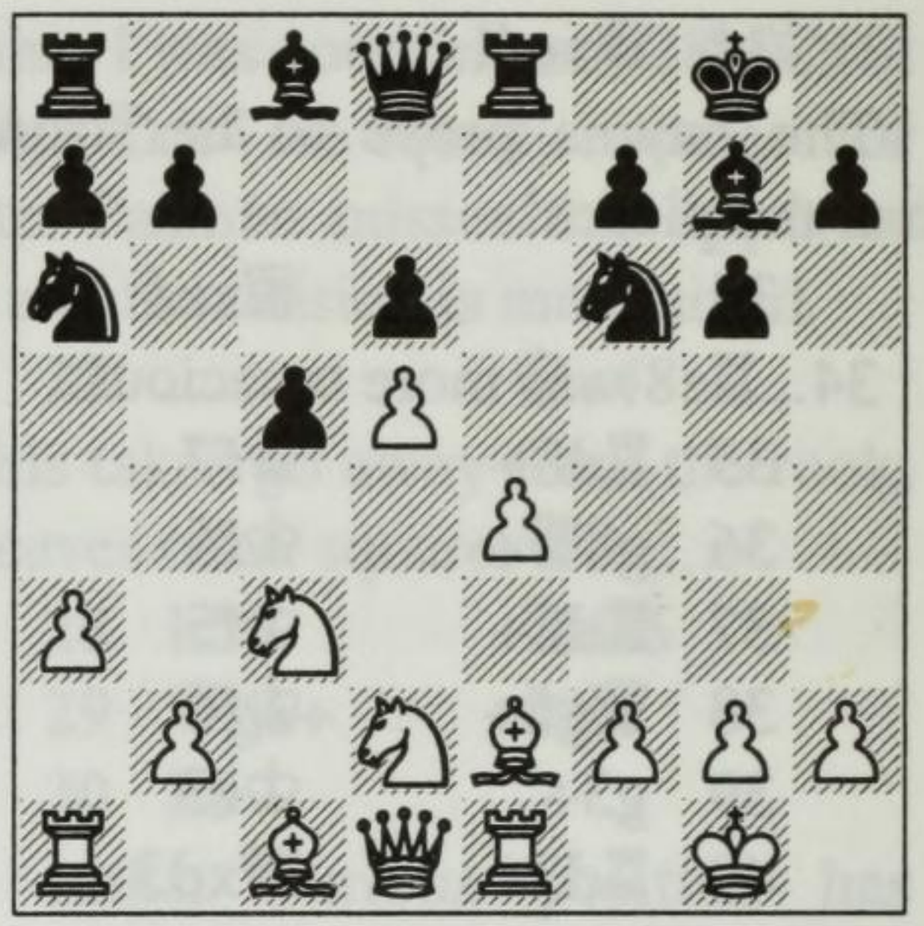
Strictly speaking, the knight is badly placed on this square, as would be emphasised by the retreat of the bishop to b1, after which Black cannot play 11...a6 because of 12 a3, while the fact that White's e-pawn is defended frees his king's knight to continue the manoeuvre begun with his tenth move.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **11** | **♗e2** | **♖e8** |
| **12** | **a3** | |

In the light of what was said earlier, it must be concluded that 12 f3 is stronger.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | **...** | **♘a6** |
| **13** | **♖e1** *(D)* | |

*B*



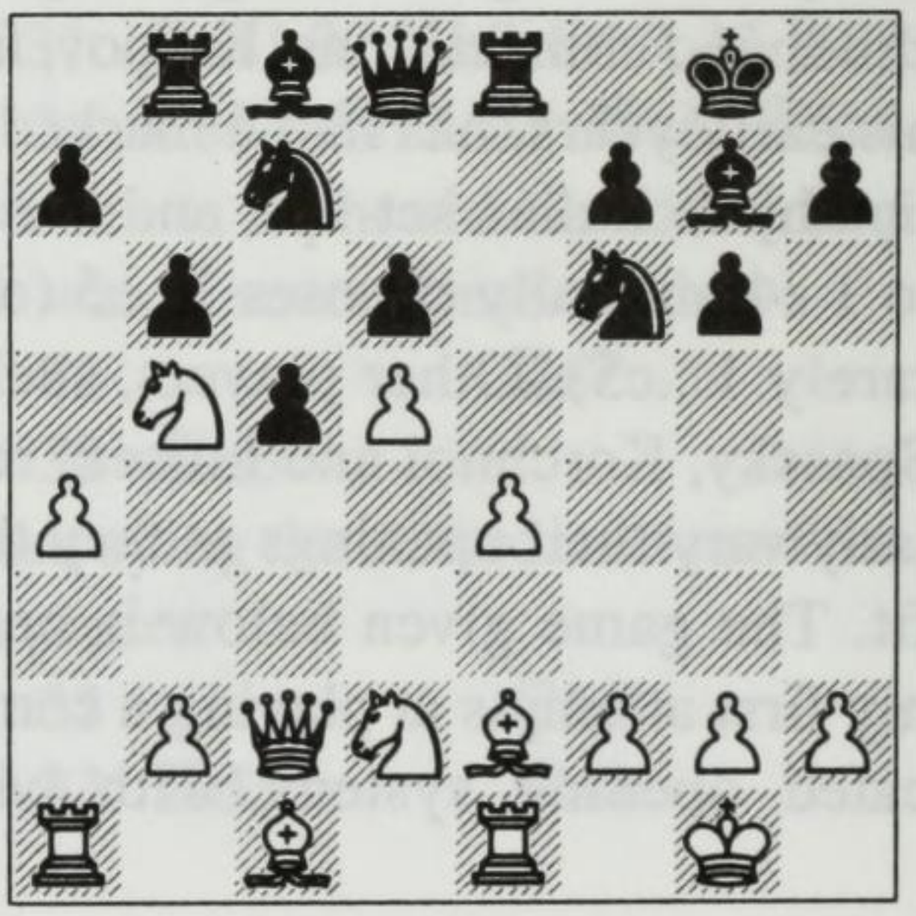
A loss of time – the knight on d2 is still 'occupied'. If White did not wish to play 13 f3 then the following pawn sacrifice deserved attention: 13 ♕c2 ♘c7 14 a4 ♘fxd5 15 exd5 ♗xc3 16 bxc3 ♖xe2 17 c4, when the absence of Black's dark-squared bishop may prove dangerous for him.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **13** | **...** | **♘c7** |
| **14** | **♕c2** | **♖b8** |
| **15** | **a4** | |

15 b4!? deserved serious attention, so as to use the tempo 'presented' by Black on his 10th move.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **15** | **...** | **b6** |
| **16** | **♘b5** *(D)* | |

*B*



After various adventures, a frequently-occurring position has been reached, in which it is well known that the strongest continuation is 16 ♘c4 ♗a6 17 ♘a3 or 17 ♗f4, with some advantage. The move made by White turns out to be a blank shot.

**16 ... a6**

**17 ♘xc7**

17 ♘a7 would have been more consistent. True, after 17...♗b7 18 ♘c6 ♗xc6 19 dxc6 d5! Black's position appears to me to be quite acceptable.

**17 ... ♕xc7**

It becomes clear that White is unable to prevent the intended advance of the b-pawn. True, as it turns out, this figures only as a threat until the very end of the game.

**18 ♖a2**

White moves his rook out of range of the dark-squared bishop, and prepares to meet 18...b5 19 axb5 axb5 with 20 b4. Although Black has a very comfortable position in this case (20...c4), I decided to attempt to exploit the fact that my opponent was somewhat behind in development, and so initiated play on the kingside, reckoning that the move ...b5 would not run away.

**18 ... ♕e7**

**19 f3**

A clever trap. It would appear that I had considered this move to be impossible because of the combination 19...♘xd5 20 exd5 ♗d4+ 21 ♔h1 ♗f2. On closer inspection, however, it turns out that after 22 ♘e4! ♗xe1 23 ♗g5 White gains the advantage. But both 19...b5 and the move made by Black are quite good.

**19 ... ♘h5**

**20 ♘f1 f5**

The absence of White's rook from the first rank gives Black additional chances along the e-file, and therefore White must avoid it being opened.

**21 ♗d3 f4**

These days I would have preferred 21...♗d4+ or, if you will excuse the repetition, 21...b5.

**22 g4!**

When I made my previous move, the remainder, as I recall, seemed perfectly clear: 22...♗e5, 23...g5 and so on with a mate, but White introduces certain obstacles.

**22 ... ♗d4+**

The exchange on g3 followed by 23...♗h3 would have been quieter, and, possibly, stronger, but Black felt obliged to take immediate action.

**23 ♔h1!**

In reply to 23 ♔g2, 23...♕h4 would have won by force (24 ♖e2 ♗xg4; 24 ♕e2 ♗xg4 25 fxg4 f3+!).

**23 ... ♕h4**

**24 ♖e2!**

After 24 ♕e2 Black has a pleasant choice between the quiet 24...♗f2 when, in view of the threat 25...♘g3+, White must give up the exchange, and the more lively 24...♗xg4 25 fxg4 f3 26 ♕xf3 (26 ♕d2 f2 27 ♖e2 ♖f8! 28 gxh5 ♕h3) 26...♖f8! with very dangerous threats. Even after the text, the bishop sacrifice was probably the most

effective continuation, for instance: 24...♗xg4 25 fxg4 ♕xg4 (this appears stronger than 25...f3 26 ♖e3 ♕xg4 27 ♕f2[1]) 26 ♖g2 ♕h3 with a very dangerous attack. Black, however, was attracted by something different.

**24 ... ♕h3**
**25 ♖g2 ♕xf3**
**26 ♘d2!**

Interesting variations would result after the acceptance of the sacrifice by 26 gxh5 ♗h3 27 ♖a3! ♖xe4 (alas, the tempting 27...♖e5 with the threat of 28...♖g5 fails to 28 ♗xa6 and after 28...♗xg2+ 29 ♕xg2 ♖g5 30 ♖xf3!) 28 ♗xa6 ♗e3! 29 ♖c3 (defending his c1-bishop) 29...b5!

**26 ... ♕e3**

It is not easy to decide straight away on a queen sacrifice in a team event. It may have been quite good to sacrifice only a piece by 26...♕h3 27 gxh5 ♕xh5.

**27 ♘f1**

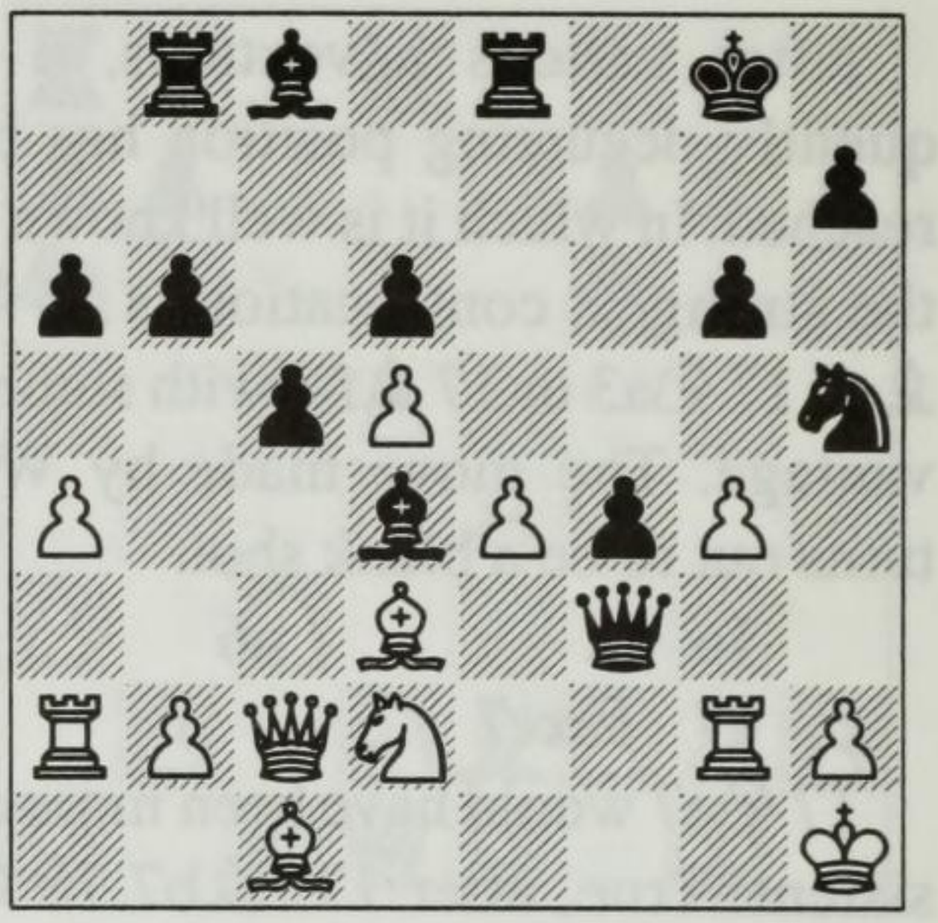
Clearly, on 27 gxh5, 27...♗h3 is very strong.

**27 ... ♕f3**
**28 ♘d2** *(D)*
**28 ... ♗xg4?**

This would appear to be the first occasion on which I made a positional sacrifice of a queen for a knight.

**29 ♘xf3 ♗xf3**

It is easy to see that Black does have certain compensation. Both his bishops have taken up threatening positions, and at the first opportunity his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knight will come into play with great effect. The most immediate and transparent threat is 30...♖e5 and 31...♘g3+. It is against this that White's next move is directed.

**30 h4**

After the conclusion of our game, it naturally became the subject of a lively discussion, in which both the members and the trainers of the youth teams took part. Unfortunately, I cannot remember all the variations which appeared as a result of this analysis, but apparently the conclusion was reached that Black had not risked a great deal. Now, however, I am not nearly so confident about the irreproachability of Black's operation. Thus 30 ♗d2 deserves serious attention, aiming to eliminate as quickly as possible the enemy's dark-squared bishop. The line 30...♖e5 31 h4 ♗xg2+ 32 ♔xg2 f3+ 33 ♔xf3 ♖f8+ 34 ♔e2 is not dangerous for White, since his king finds safety on the queenside.

---

1 However, 27...♘f4 28 ♕xf3 ♘xd3 now wins for Black.

The trappy 31...♗f2 is successful after 32 ♗c3? ♘g3+ 33 ♔h2 ♖h5, but by continuing immediately 32 ♔h2, White meets all the threats. Best for Black is perhaps the quiet 31...♖f8 32 ♗c3 ♗xg2+ 33 ♕xg2 f3 34 ♕g4 ♖f4, or 34 ♕h3 f2, with a highly unclear position, in which White's material advantage should not be underestimated.

**30 ... ♖f8**

In the resulting position there is nothing for the rook to do along the fifth rank.

**31 ♗e2**

The queen sacrifice had clearly unsettled my normally imperturbable opponent, and he makes a decisive mistake. After the immediate 31 ♔h2 ♗xg2 32 ♕xg2 a similar position to that considered in the previous note would have been reached.

**31 ... ♘g3+**
**32 ♔h2 ♗xg2**

This order of moves had escaped White's attention. Now Black is attacking with a perfectly satisfactory material balance.

**33 ♔xg2 ♘xe2**
**34 ♕xe2**

Despair. But after the relatively better 34 ♖a3 (34 ♔f3 ♘g1+!) Black also obtains a decisive advantage by continuing 34...f3+ 35 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 36 ♔xf3 ♖f8+ 37 ♔g4 ♖f2! (37...h5+ 38 ♔g5 ♘xc1 39 e5 is less clear).

**34 ... f3+**
**35 ♕xf3 ♖xf3**
**36 ♔xf3 ♖f8+**
**37 ♔g3 ♗e5+**
**38 ♔g2 ♗f4**
**0-1**

After 39 ♖a1 ♗xc1 40 ♖xc1 ♖f4 he loses a second pawn.

## Game 5

## Tal – Straume

*Riga Championship 1953*

Ruy Lopez

'A game is not finished until the clocks are stopped'. One would expect this chess axiom to be clear to everyone. And yet, how many times does it happen that, in a completely won position, a blunder radically changes everything that only a minute previously had seemed absolutely clear. Looking back on my tournament career, I can recall a number of such extreme occurrences. The most recent of these was in the 42nd USSR Championship, when I allowed undivided first place to slip from my grasp. It was in my game with Vaganian. The exchange and a pawn up, I feel puzzled: why does my opponent continue playing? One slight mistake, a second, more serious one, yet another, and the miraculous happens – I have to agree to a draw. By all accounts, it is a premature weakening, a laziness which suddenly occurs at that moment when there is only a little more to do, and is one of the innate short-comings of a player which reveals itself fairly frequently. The following game serves (more accurately, could have served) as evidence of this.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **e5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **♘c6** |
| **3** | **♗b5** | **a6** |
| **4** | **♗a4** | **♘f6** |
| **5** | **0-0** | **♗e7** |
| **6** | **d4** | |

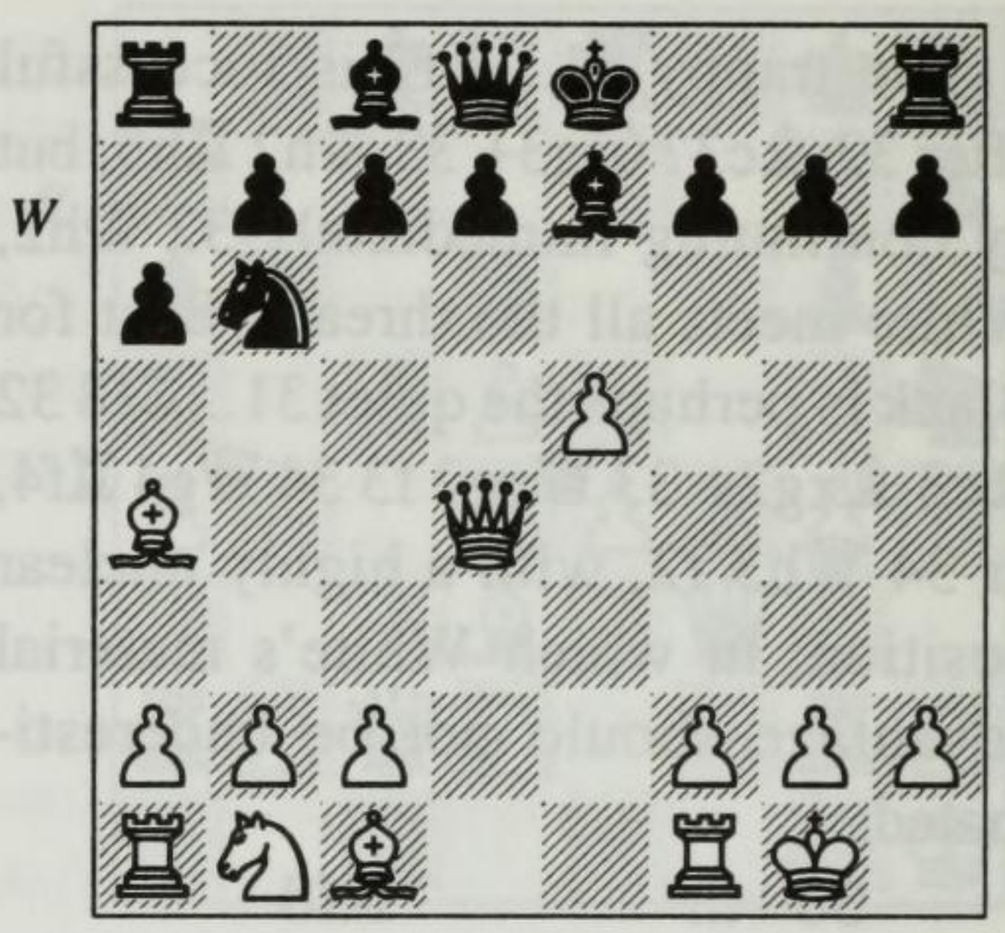
Young players are very fond of trying to catch their opponents in prepared variations. At the time of this game I used to carefully follow chess periodicals, and in the magazine *Shakhmaty v SSSR* (of the existence of others I had no suspicion) I saw some analysis, if I remember correctly, by G. Geiler, in which the author showed that after 6...exd4 7 e5 ♘e4 8 ♘xd4 ♘c5 9 ♘f5 0-0 10 ♕g4 g6 11 ♗h6 ♖e8 (11...d5 12 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 13 ♗xf8 ♔xf8! was only written about later) 12 ♘c3 ♘xa4 13 ♘d5! White obtains a most dangerous attack. It was this variation which served as my guiding star. Alas, my opponent, a player from an older generation, did not subscribe to the magazine.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **6** | **...** | **exd4** |
| **7** | **e5** | **♘d5** |
| **8** | **♘xd4** | |

The other possibility here is 8 c3 but after 8...♘b6 White has to demonstrate that he has any advantage.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **8** | **...** | **♘xd4** |
| **9** | **♕xd4** | **♘b6** *(D)* |
| **10** | **♕g4!?** | |

Thus and only thus! I had not yet got as far as realising that after 10 ♗b3 0-0 11 ♗f4 White's position is clearly preferable. Meanwhile the 'non-theoretical' 7...♘d5 had to be refuted, and




if, in order to do this, one had to sacrifice a piece, all the better. As 10...0-0 is ruled out because of 11 ♗h6 I considered that the gift had to be accepted. Strictly speaking, this is not quite so. 10...g6 was possible, although in this case it is difficult for Black to complete his development after 11 ♗h6. Straume chooses the strongest move.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **10** | **...** | **♘xa4** |
| **11** | **♕xg7** | **♖f8** |
| **12** | **♗h6** | |

White's plan is perfectly clear: to capture the h7-pawn, and, 'keeping in reserve' the possibility of capturing the rook, quickly develop his pieces, preparing in some cases the advance of his f-pawn. Black must aim rapidly to mobilise his queenside, so as to evacuate his king there at the first opportunity.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | **...** | **d5** |

Black's forces are seriously restricted by the white pawn on e5. In view of this, 12...d6 deserved consideration, even though this opens the

central files. However, the move made by Black should not be criticised.

**13 ♕xh7 ♗d7**

But this is too quiet. Black develops his pieces in the wrong sequence. White's task would have been much more difficult in the case of 13...♕d7 with the unpleasant threat of 14...♕f5. It may be added that on 13...♗e6, 14 ♗xf8 (but not immediately 14 f4 ♗c5+ 15 ♔h1 ♕h4! 16 f5 0-0-0!) 14...♗xf8 15 f4 is unpleasant for Black.

**14 ♘d2 ♗b5**

14...♕c8 was more cautious, on which White would probably have continued 15 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 16 ♘f3 maintaining an attacking position.

**15 c4!**

White naturally strives to open lines.

**15 ... dxc4**

15...♗xc4 was bad in view of 16 ♘xc4 dxc4 17 ♖ad1 ♕c8 18 e6! fxe6 19 ♖fe1 with an irresistible attack. But by continuing 15...♗c6, Black could still have maintained a defensible position. With White's knight coming into play there may no longer be a defence.

**16 ♘e4 ♘xb2!**

This is now the best chance. What matters is not just the capture of the pawn but, much more important, the fact that the black knight keeps control of the d-file.

**17 ♗xf8**

The other plan of attack, 17 ♖fe1, appeared less convincing in view of 17...♔d7.

**17 ... ♗xf8**

**18 ♘f6+ ♔e7**

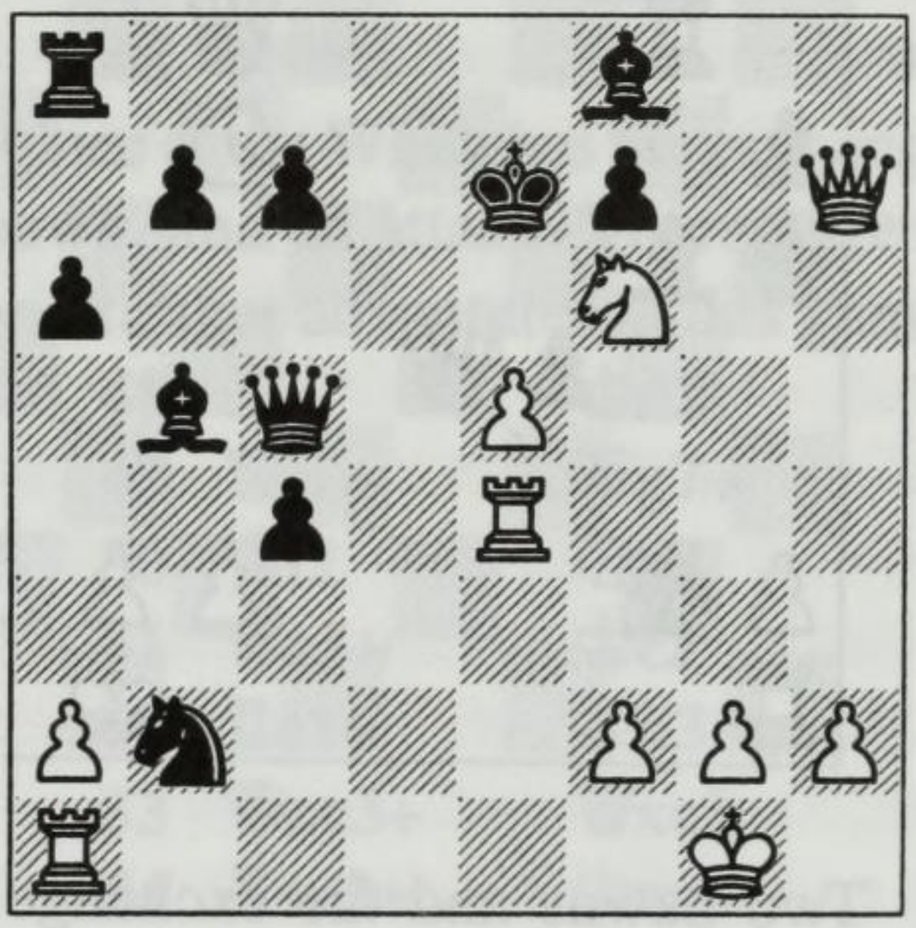
**19 ♖fe1**

White prepares the advance e6, which, if played immediately, would have met with the audacious reply 19...♔xe6, after which it would not be at all easy to arrest the 'traveller'.

**19 ... ♕d4**

19...♕d3 was slightly better, when 20 ♘e4 is perhaps the strongest, maintaining all the threats.

**20 ♖e4 ♕c5** *(D)*



**21 e6!**

Since the knight is invulnerable – 21...♔xf6 22 ♕xf7+ ♔g5 23 h3 – Black suffers considerable material losses, which become particularly marked after the next move.

**21 ... ♔d6**

**22 e7! ♔c6**

No better was 22...♗xe7 23 ♕xf7 threatening mate on e6.

**23 ♕xf7**

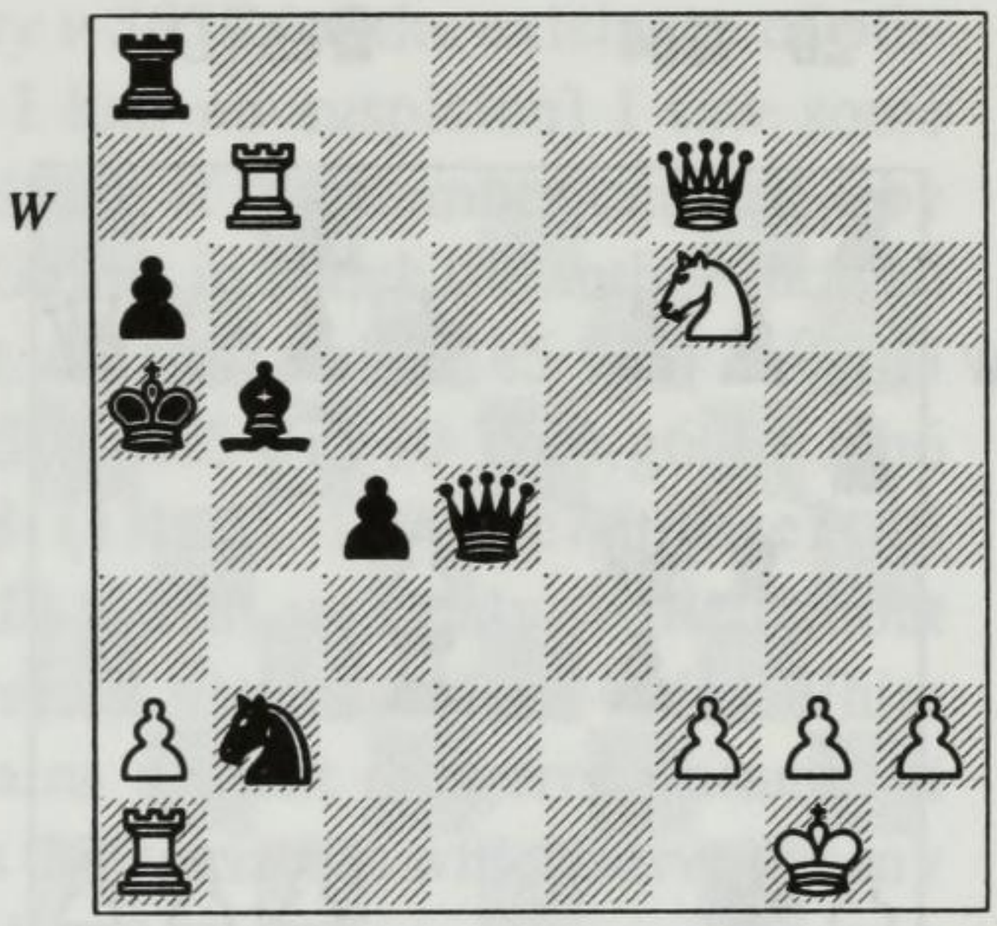
Of course, 23 e8♕+ was also possible, but Black's rook appeared to be fairly passive, and, in addition, White

had prepared a tactical blow (cf. move 25).

**23 ... ♗xe7**
**24 ♖xe7 ♔b6**
**25 ♖xc7!**

I was already anticipating a conclusion to the game of the type 25...♗c6 26 ♖xb7+ (26 ♘d7+ is too simple).

**25 ... ♕d4**
**26 ♖xb7+ ♔a5** *(D)*




Two pawns and the exchange up, plus an attack. In principle, a reserve sufficient for a whole tournament. It is here that the extraordinary begins. I simply cannot understand why White found it necessary to make the following move.

**27 ♕d5??**

It was one of two things: either I thought that after the exchange of queens my opponent would be bound to resign, or else I was attracted by a further tactical trick (27...♕xf6 28 ♖xb5+). Meanwhile, after the natural 27 ♘d5 Black would have had absolutely every justification for resigning, since he has not a single move at his disposal that is at all reasonable. The variation 27...♘d1 28 ♕f3, although not forced, is attractive.

**27 ... ♖d8**

This move came as a complete surprise to me. Since the knight becomes stuck at f6, the passed c-pawn develops into a real threat.

**28 ♕xd4 ♖xd4**
**29 h3**

29 f3 was probably more accurate, aiming to bring the knight into play immediately.

**29 ... c3**
**30 ♖c1 ♔b4**
**31 ♖e7**

White changes his mind. His immediate task is to give up his knight for the pawn.

**31 ... ♗c4**

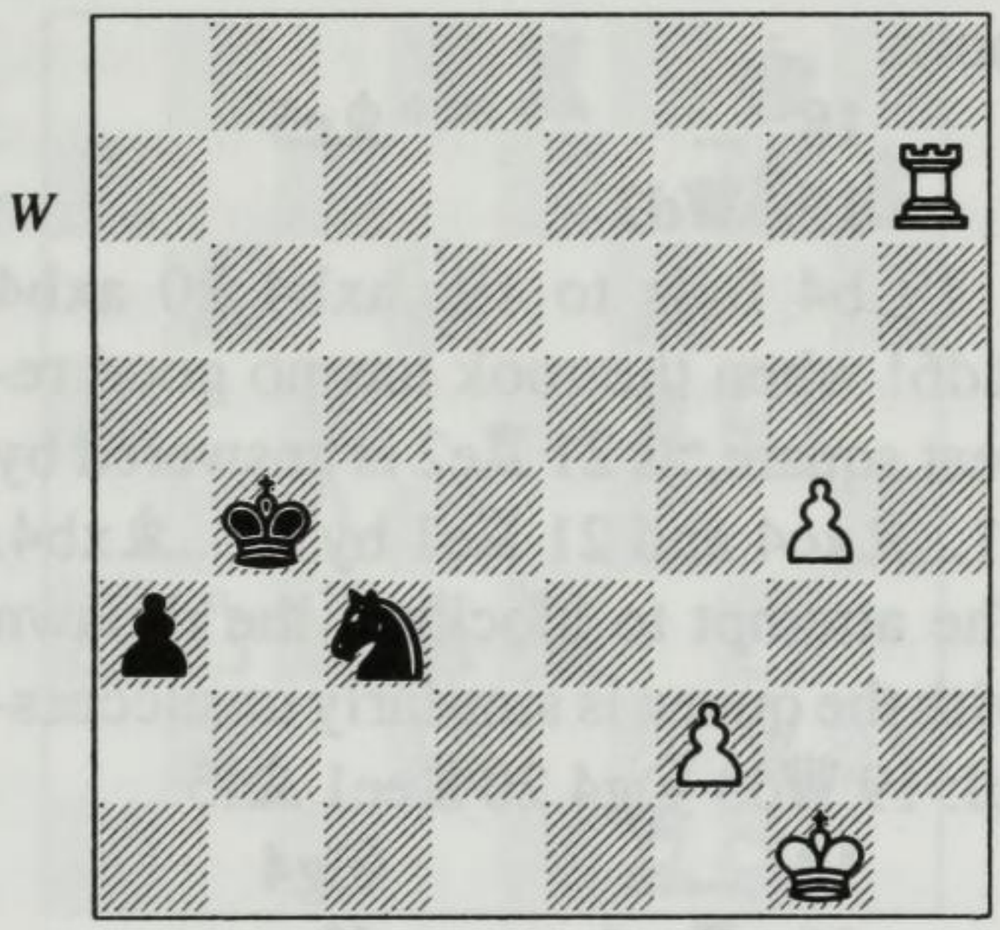
Black achieves nothing by 31...♖d1+ 32 ♖xd1 ♘xd1 33 ♘d5+ or 31...♘d3 32 ♖c2 ♗a4 33 ♖b7+!

**32 ♘e4 ♖d1+**
**33 ♖xd1 ♘xd1**
**34 ♘xc3 ♘xc3**
**35 h4 ♗xa2**
**36 h5 a5**
**37 h6 ♗b1**
**38 h7?**

It is obvious that the knight is ideally placed on c3. From the squares a4 or b1, it is ready, if necessary, to block out the enemy rook. The following forced variation should not have been all that difficult to calculate: 38 ♖b7+! ♘b5 (otherwise 39 ♖xb1) 39 h7 ♗xh7 40 ♖xh7 a4 41 g4 a3 42 ♔g2 a2 43

♖h1 ♘c3 44 ♖a1 ♔b3 45 g5 ♔b2 46 ♖xa2+ ♔xa2 47 g6 ♘d5 48 ♔f3 ♔b3 49 ♔e4 ♔c4 50 ♔e5 ♘e7 51 g7 ♔c5 52 f4. The hasty move in the game once again puts White's win in jeopardy.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **38** | **...** | **♗xh7** |
| **39** | **♖xh7** | **a4** |
| **40** | **g4** | **a3** *(D)* |




**41 ♖a7??**

This was White's last chance to force a win by 41 ♖b7+. After both 41...♘b5 42 ♖e7 a2 43 ♖e1 ♘c3 44 ♖a1 ♔b3 45 ♔g2 ♔b2 46 ♖xa2+ ♔xa2 47 ♔f3 ♔b3 48 ♔f4 and 41...♔c4 42 ♖a7 ♔b3 43 ♔g2 a2 44 ♖xa2 ♔xa2 45 ♔f3, Black is one tempo short of a draw.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **41** | **...** | **♘a4??** |

A rather rare case of mutual blindness. The simple 41...a2 would have drawn, since after 42 ♖xa2 (forced due to the threat of 42...♘a4) 42...♘xa2 43 g5 ♘c3 44 ♔g2 ♔c5 the black king gets back in time.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **42** | **♖b7+** | **♔c3** |

White's rook reaches the first rank – the rest is a matter of simple technique.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **42** | **...** | **♔c3** |
| **43** | **♖b1** | **♔c2** |
| **44** | **♖e1** | |

White now has no need to calculate variations with pawns against a knight. He wins in a different way.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **44** | **...** | **♘c3** |
| **45** | **g5** | **a2** |
| **46** | **g6** | **♘b1** |
| **47** | **g7** | **a1♕** |
| **48** | **g8♕** | |

Once again White has the exchange, a pawn, and an attack. There were to be no further adventures in this game.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **48** | **...** | **♔d2** |
| **49** | **♕e6** | **♕g7+** |
| **50** | **♔f1** | **♘c3** |
| **51** | **♕e3+** | **♔c2** |
| **52** | **♖c1+** | **♔b3** |
| **53** | **♕xc3+** | **♕xc3** |
| **54** | **♖xc3+** | **♔xc3** |
| **55** | **♔e2** | **♔d4** |
| **56** | **♔f3** | **♔e5** |
| **57** | **♔g4** | **♔f6** |
| **58** | **♔f4** | **1-0** |

White's last three moves were the only moves.

Game 6

**Saigin – Tal**

*Match for the title of Soviet Master (8), Riga 1954*

English Opening

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **d4** | **♘f6** |
| **2** | **c4** | **c5** |

**3 ♘f3 e6**
**4 g3**

This slow plan of development does not cause Black any particular difficulties. Much more active is 4 d5.

**4 ... cxd4**
**5 ♘xd4 d5**

In another game between the same players (Leningrad 1952) there was played 5...♘c6 6 ♗g2 ♕b6 7 ♘c2! The move 5...d5 is stronger.

**6 ♗g2 e5**
**7 ♘f3 d4!**

Now Black's central pawns hinder the freedom of movement of the white pieces.

**8 0-0 ♘c6**
**9 e3**

Fearing the possibility of a subsequent ...e4, White decides to undermine the black centre.

**9 ... ♗e7**
**10 exd4 exd4**
**11 ♘bd2**

Threatening 12 ♘b3.

**11 ... ♗e6**
**12 ♖e1**

Nothing is gained by 12 ♘g5 ♗f5 when the white knight is badly placed.

**12 ... 0-0**
**13 b3**

On 13 ♘b3 there could have followed 13...d3 and it is difficult for White to undertake anything active.

**13 ... ♕d7**
**14 ♗b2 ♖ad8**

Black has completed his development, and plans to start active play in the centre and on the kingside. Therefore White must create counterplay on the queenside as soon as possible.

**15 a3 a5**
**16 ♘e5 ♘xe5**
**17 ♖xe5 b6**
**18 ♘f3?**

A mistake. White hopes to eliminate the black d-pawn, but in this he is unsuccessful. 18 ♕f3 was a stronger move.

**18 ... ♗c5**
**19 ♕d2**

19 b4 fails to 19...axb4 20 axb4 ♗d6! when the rook has no good retreat square, as 21 ♖e2 is answered by 21...♗xc4 and 21 ♖e1 by 21...♗xb4. The attempt to blockade the d-pawn with the queen is similarly unsuccessful: 19 ♕d3 ♘g4 20 ♖ee1 ♗f5.

**19 ... ♘g4**
**20 ♖ee1 d3**
**21 ♖f1**

Stronger was 21 ♘e5.

**21 ... ♕d6!**

This move prevents the advance b4, and stops 22 h3, which is crushingly answered by 22...♘xf2 23 ♖xf2 ♕xg3.

**22 ♕c3**

Black has the advantage after 22 ♘g5 ♗f5 23 ♘e4 ♗xe4 24 ♗xe4 ♖fe8 25 ♕g5 ♗d4.

**22 ... f6**
**23 ♖ad1**

23 ♘g5 loses to 23...♘xf2! 24 ♖xf2 ♗xf2+ 25 ♔xf2 fxg5+.

**23 ... ♖fe8**
**24 ♖d2**

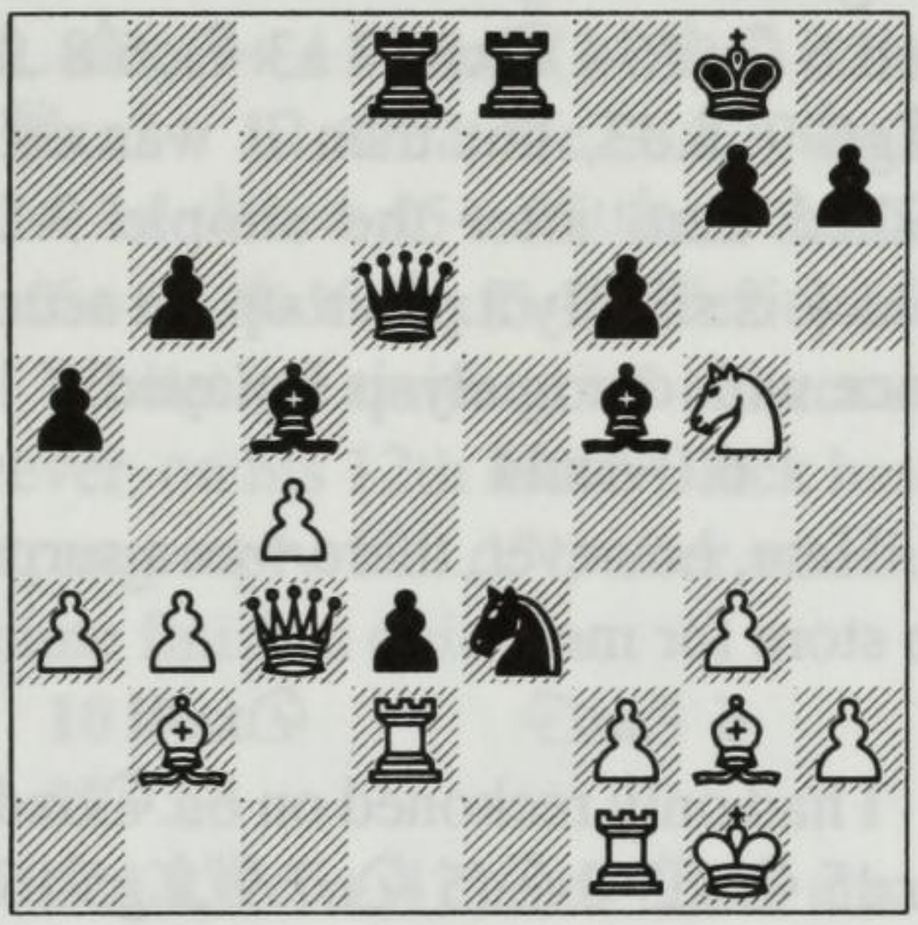
24 ♘g5 once again fails, this time to 24...♘xf2 25 ♖xf2 ♗xf2+ 26 ♔xf2 ♕c5+.

**24 ... ♗f5**

**25 ♘g5**

White seeks salvation in complications. 25...♖e2 was threatened, and 25 ♘h4 was well answered by 25...♗e4.

**25 ... ♘e3!** *(D)*



*W*

**26 fxe3**

Moving the rook is no better, for example: 26 ♖e1 (on other rook moves 26...♘xg2 27 ♔xg2 ♕c6+ followed by 28...♗d4 and 29...fxg5 decides) 26...♘xg2 27 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 28 ♔xg2 ♕c6+ 29 f3 ♖e1.

**26 ... ♗xe3+**

**27 ♔h1 ♗xd2**

**28 ♕xd2 ♖e2**

**29 ♕c3**

After 29 ♗d5+ there follows, of course, 29...♕xd5+.

**29 ... ♖xg2**

**0-1**

Now on 30 ♔xg2 there follows 30...d2 31 ♖d1 ♗g4 32 ♘f3 ♕d3!

Game 7

**Tal – Averbakh**

*USSR Team Championship, Riga 1954*

Four Knights Game

Autumn 1954. Riga receives the participants in a most important event – the Team Championship of the USSR. Petrosian, Taimanov, Averbakh, Korchnoi and other experienced players lead their delegations. It is easy to imagine the apprehension of a young player, finding himself for the first time in such company. Not long before this I had succeeded in winning a classification match for the title of master against the Byelorussian player V. Saigin by 8-6, and although formally I took part with the 'rank' of candidate master, the decision was expected to arrive literally at any day. It is quite natural that the 'Daugava' team did not place great hopes on the results of its leader. That is how it worked out in the end – a win in the first round proved to be the only one.

Every player has his memorable games and tournaments. Without doubt, the first board tournament in Riga was the strongest I had played in, and the game given below was my third encounter with a grandmaster (if, of course, you do not include fairly successful performances against them in simultaneous displays).

In the spring of the same year I had been fortunate enough to play against the then legendary Keres in Tallinn,

and even drew one of our two encounters.

**1 e4 e5**
**2 ♘f3 ♘c6**
**3 ♘c3**

It was by no means a striving for a draw which caused White to choose this move, which enjoys such a peaceful reputation. For all my shortcomings, I can truly say that only once in my life have I played for a draw with White – against Korchnoi in the 1955 USSR Team Championship: 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5. I achieved my goal, but only with great difficulty.

I wanted to try out, against a strong player, a sharp variation, known to theory as the Belgrade Gambit.

**3 ... ♘f6**
**4 d4 exd4**
**5 ♘d5**

This variation, or, more correctly, one of its branches: 5...♘xe4 6 ♕e2 f5 7 ♗f4, was one of the hobbies of the chess section of the Palace of Pioneers. Particularly 'zealous' were V. Kirilov and myself. As an example I will give one variation, which even now appears interesting enough. 7...♗b4+ 8 c3 dxc3 9 ♘xb4 ♘xb4 10 ♗g5 ♘d3+ 11 ♔d1 cxb2 12 ♖b1 ♕e7 13 ♗xe7 ♘c3+ 14 ♔c2 ♘xe2 15 ♗xe2 ♘xf2 16 ♗a3 ♘xh1 17 ♖xh1, with a ± assessment. Other lines were in the same spirit: lively and volatile, though not very correct. In my match with Saigin the Belgrade Gambit had occurred twice. On both occasions my opponent had played 5...♗e7, which also suited me. On this occasion the Moscow Grandmaster chooses a little-known, but by no means bad continuation.

**5 ... ♘b4**

This move had also been examined by us, since in the 1952 Latvian Championship I. Zhdanov had played it against me. Then White had continued 6 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 7 a3 ♘c6 8 ♗g5 ♕g6 9 ♗d3, but then it was established that, after the simple 9...d6, Black is simply a pawn up. In accordance with our analysis I played:

**6 ♘xd4**

Here, however, there was a surprise in store for me.

**6 ... ♘xe4!**

I had only reckoned on 6...♘bxd5 7 exd5 ♘xd5 8 ♘f5 ♘e7 9 ♗g5 f6 10 ♗xf6! gxf6 11 ♕h5+ ♘g6 12 ♗c4 with a dangerous attack for the piece. Averbakh's innovation led to a reassessment of the variation, and now 5...♘b4 is considered to be one of the simplest ways of obtaining a comfortable game. Nothing better than the modest 6 ♗c4 has been found for White.

**7 ♘f5**

It is already too late for White to retreat.

**7 ... c6!**

The beginning of a strong manoeuvre, the point of which lies in his 9th move.

**8 ♘xb4 ♗xb4+**
**9 c3 ♕f6**

A very important intermediate move, after which Black's advantage becomes indisputable.

**10 ♕f3**

The attempt to 'sell' the knight more dearly by 10 ♘xg7+ is most simply refuted by the cold-blooded 10...♔d8. In place of the move made, the apparently more active 10 ♕g4 was worth considering. In the case of 10...♗xc3+ 11 bxc3 (11 ♔e2 d5!) 11...♕xc3+ 12 ♔e2 ♕c2+ 13 ♔e3 ♕xf2+ 14 ♔xe4 d5+ 15 ♔e5 ♗xf5 (15...f6+ 16 ♔d6 ♗xf5 17 ♕e2+) 16 ♕f4! White has quite good chances. However, on his 12th move Black has the strong reply 12...d5!, after which the game finishes quickly.

**10 ... ♘xc3**
**11 a3**

11 ♗d2 ♕e5+ 12 ♘e3 ♘d5 also does not help.

**11 ... ♗a5**

On meeting an unknown opening variation for the first time, the Grandmaster has succeeded in finding a refutation at the board. Over his first ten moves, Averbakh spent more than two hours. Evidently the wish to conserve his remaining few minutes explains this impulsive move (a piece is attacked – it must be retreated), which alters the assessment of the position. By continuing simply 11...♕e5+ 12 ♔d2 (12 ♕e3 ♘d5+) 12...♘e4+ 13 ♔c2 and if necessary 13...♗f8 Black would have remained two pawns up with an easy win.

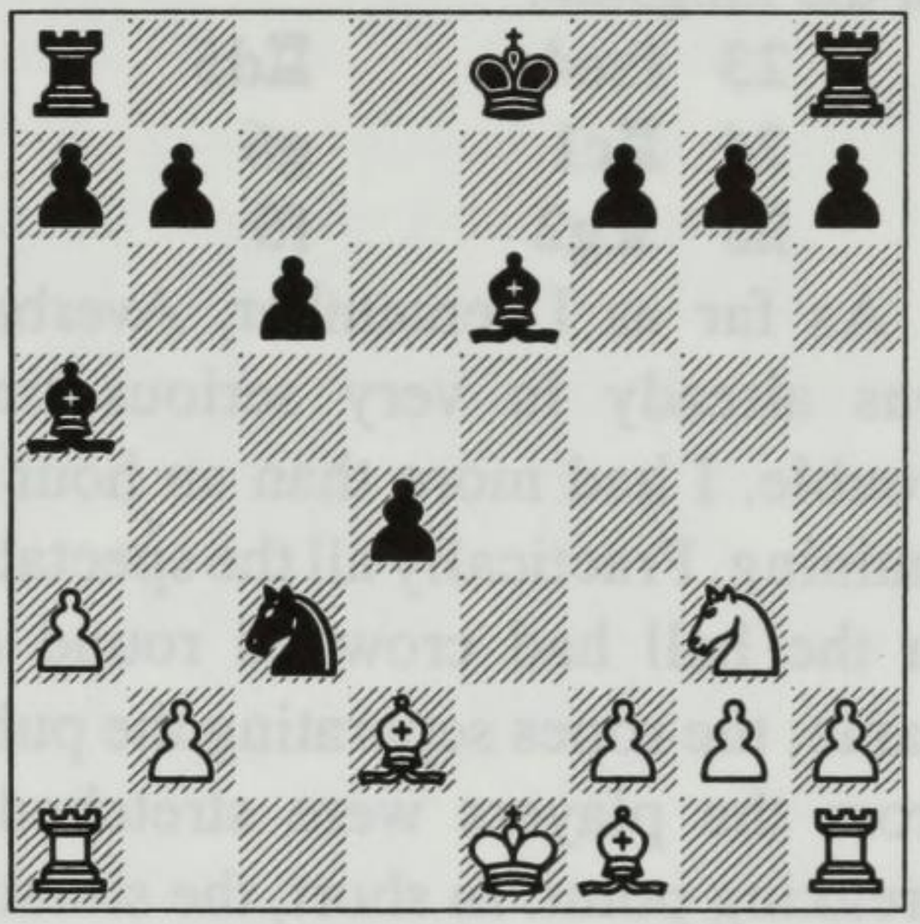
**12 ♗d2**

Now Black must sooner or later lose a piece, since 12...♕e5+ 13 ♕e3 ♘e4 fails to 14 ♘d6+! ♕xd6 15 ♕xe4+ ♔d8 16 ♗xa5+ b6 17 ♗b4.

**12 ... d5**
**13 ♘g3!**

13 ♘e3 is weaker due to 13...♘e4.

**13 ... ♕e6+**
**14 ♕e3 d4**
**15 ♕xe6+ ♗xe6** *(D)*




Black's knight is doomed, but it is dangerous to capture it immediately, since White is too far behind in development. The attempt to castle as quickly as possible does not work – after 16 ♗d3 0-0-0 17 0-0 Black has a saving check: 17...♘e2+. Therefore White first of all moves his king to a less dangerous place.

**16 f3 0-0-0**
**17 ♔f2 ♗b6**
**18 bxc3 dxc3+**
**19 ♗e3 ♗xe3+**

The intrusion of the rook onto the seventh rank would prove ineffective after 20 ♗e2.

**20 ♔xe3 ♖he8**
**21 ♘e4**

White has time to establish his knight on this central square, since Black gains nothing by the discovered check after 21...f5 22 ♘xc3.

**21 ... ♗d5**
**22 g4 ♗xe4**

Otherwise after 23 ♗d3 White would keep an ideal pawn formation on the kingside.

**23 fxe4 ♖d5**
**24 ♖c1 g6**
**25 ♗g2 f5**

As far as I remember, Averbakh was already in very serious time-trouble. I had more than an hour remaining. Practically all the spectators in the hall had crowded round our game; the ropes separating the public from the players were stretched to breaking point. In short, the situation was very tense. It is not surprising that I also became excited, and so the last 15 moves were completed at a tempo normal for a lightning tournament.

**26 gxf5?**

It is clear that with every pawn exchange Black's drawing chances increase. Therefore 26 h3 should have been played, with a won position, though not without its technical difficulties.

**26 ... gxf5**
**27 ♖hf1**

In principle – a trap. 28 ♖xf5! ♖xf5 29 ♗h3 is threatened. Surely I wasn't counting on this?

**27 ... fxe4**
**28 ♖xc3 ♖h5!**

Black naturally exploits the tempo presented by his opponent.

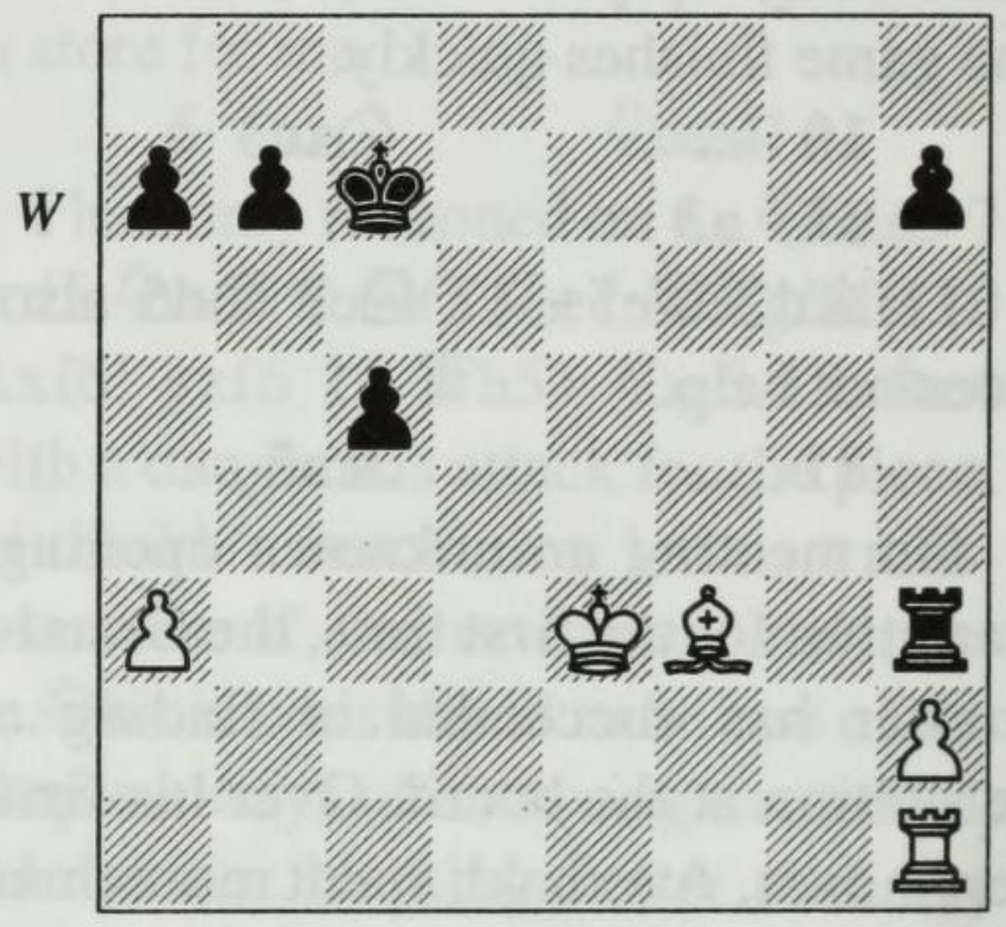
**29 ♖h1**

On 29 h3, 29...♖g8 is unpleasant.

**29 ... ♖h4**

Black for the moment has three pawns for the piece, while during the time required for the capture of the e-pawn, he will set his queenside pawns in motion. I suspect that the position is already drawn.

**30 ♖c4 ♔c7**
**31 ♖xe4 ♖exe4+**
**32 ♗xe4 ♖h3+**
**33 ♗f3 c5** *(D)*




**34 ♖g1**

White would still have had chances after 34 ♖b1 b6 35 ♖b2, followed by improving the position of his king.

**34 ... b5**
**35 ♖g7+ ♔b6**
**36 ♖b7+ ♔a6**
**37 ♖b8 ♖xh2**

This is alright, although 37...♔a5 is simpler.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **38** | **♗e2** | **♖h3+** |
| **39** | **♔e4** | **c4** |
| **40** | **a4** | **♖h4+** |

**1-0**

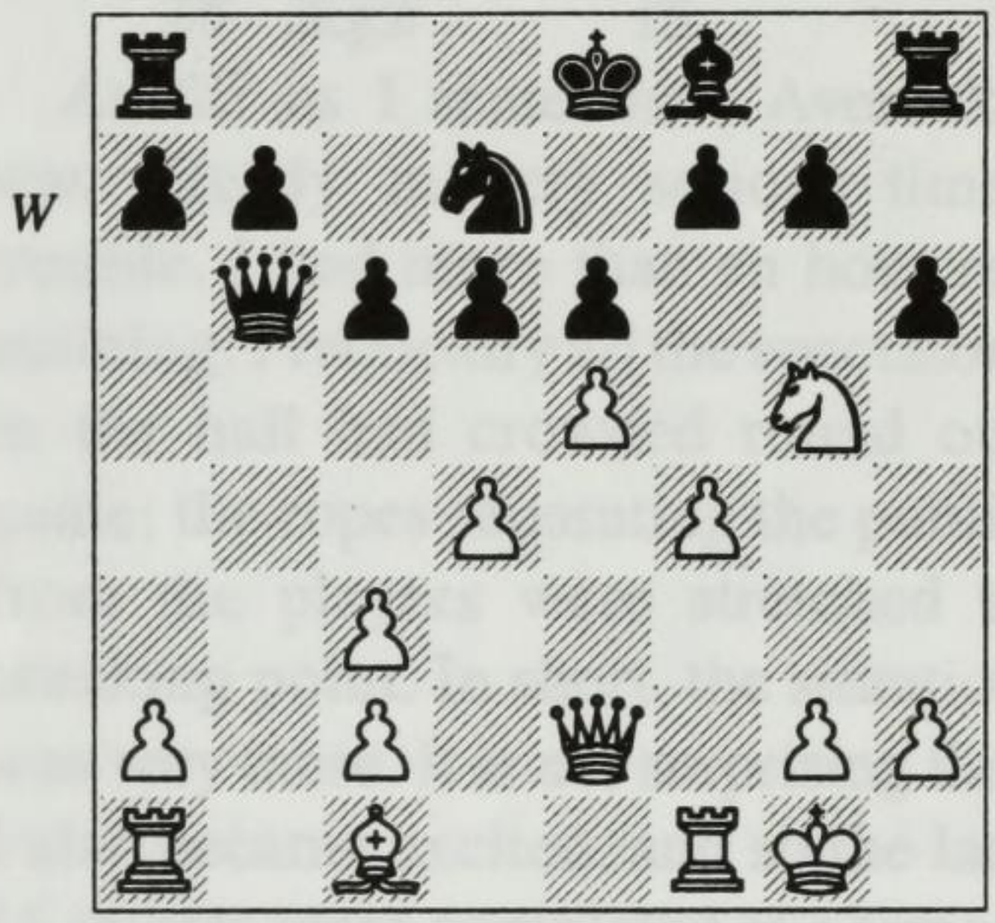
At this point, or a couple of seconds earlier, the arbiter ruled that Black had overstepped the time limit. It was with great difficulty that my captain restrained my hand, which was about to pick up my king so as to place it on d5. In this case, of course, the loss on time would not have counted. Regarding the position, there can be no two opinions – a draw, since in reply to 41 ♔d5 Black can fearlessly answer 41...bxa4 (41...♔a5 is probably also possible) 42 ♗xc4+ ♔a5.

A game rich in adventures and mistakes, but my first victory over a Grandmaster.

# 2 A Young Master

1956 began with my first appearance in the Final of the USSR Championship, which on this occasion was unfortunately rather weakened. At that time all our leading players would normally take part in the Championship, but this was the year of the Candidates Tournament, and so all those seeking the chess crown, with the exception of Spassky, preferred to rest.

I started well; in particular, one of my victories, that over Simagin, appeared in all the chess periodicals, although there was only one move in it which proved difficult.



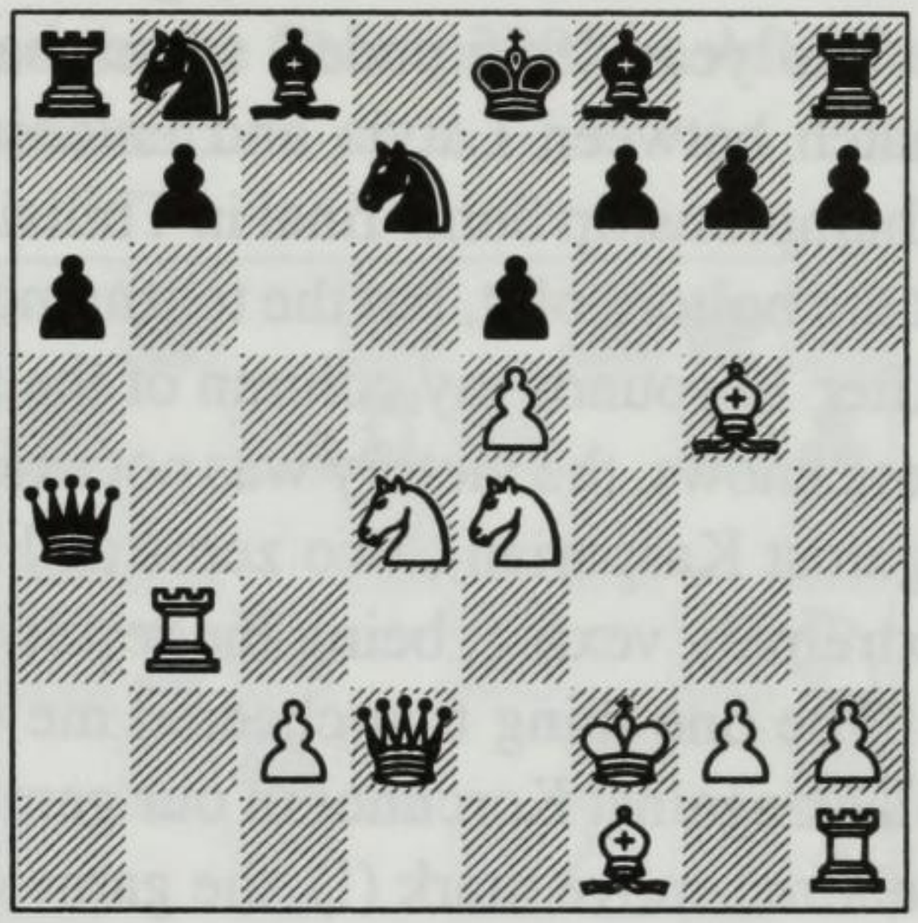
**Tal – Simagin**
*USSR Ch, Leningrad 1956*

Black is trying to drive the knight away, but White does not even think of retreating: **12 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 13 f5 dxe5 14 fxe6+ ♔xe6 15 ♖b1!!** It was after finding this move in his preliminary calculations that White decided to sacrifice the knight; on 15...♕a6 there can follow 16 ♕g4+ ♔d6 17 dxe5+ ♔c7 18 ♗f4 and on 15...♕a5 simply 16 ♖xb7. **15...♕xb1 16 ♕c4+ ♔d6 17 ♗a3+ ♔c7 18 ♖xb1 ♗xa3 19 ♕b3!** Black has adequate material compensation for the queen, but White's advantage in development makes his attack irresistible. **19...♗e7 20 ♕xb7+ ♔d6** The return journey! **21 dxe5+ ♘xe5 22 ♖d1+ ♔e6 23 ♕b3+ ♔f5 24 ♖f1+ ♔e4 25 ♖e1+ ♔f5 26 g4+ ♔f6 27 ♖f1+ ♔g6 28 ♕e6+ ♔h7 29 ♕xe5,** and in addition to his initiative, White has also gained a material advantage.

It was here that the one-sided nature of my play revealed itself. Instead of a quiet, purely technical realisation of my advantage, I decided to include my king in the attack, planning to march him along the route g1-f2-g3-h4-h5-g6. In the end this was successful, but on the way Simagin could have gained a draw.

In the sixth round came the important encounter with Spassky. It was clear that on his 'home ground' (the Championship was held in Leningrad) it was Boris who had the support of the spectators; I did not like this, and I played somewhat strangely: first limply (in the opening), then over-sharply (in the middlegame). Spassky won very 'cleanly'.

After this my play deteriorated. I won one game, drew a few, and lost one, but there were practically no good games. I say practically, because in the final round I nevertheless succeeded with a rather complicated combinative attack.




**Tal – Tolush**
*USSR Ch, Leningrad 1956*

**15 ♗b5!?** It is now known that 15 ♘xe6!! gives White a decisive attack. **15...axb5 16 ♘xb5 f6 17 exf6 gxf6** It is also difficult for Black to defend himself after 17...♕xe4 18 fxg7 ♗c5+ 19 ♔g3 ♕e5+ 20 ♔h3 ♕xg7 21 ♘c7+ ♔f7 22 ♖f1+ ♔g8 23 ♗h6, or 18...♕f5+ 19 ♖f3 ♗c5+ 20 ♔g3 ♕e5+ 21 ♔h3 ♖g8 22 ♖e1, but 17...♘xf6! would have given Black good defensive chances. **18 ♖e1! ♖a6 19 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 20 ♘xf6+ ♔f7 21 ♖f3 ♕h4+ 22 ♔f1 e5 23 ♕d5+ ♗e6 24 ♘d7+ ♔g6 25 ♘xe5+ ♔g7 26 ♖g3+ ♕xg3 27 ♕xb7+ ♘d7 28 hxg3 ♖b6 29 ♕c7 ♗c5 30 ♘xd7 ♗c4+ 31 ♖e2**, and Black overstepped the time limit.

Following the tournament, the reviewers considered that a share of 5th place was not bad for a first appearance, but I myself was dissatisfied. Since the Championship, as has already been said, was weakened, and since the competitors were, in the main, winners of the Semi-finals like myself, I had hoped to do better. In the first instance, in the creative sense. Thus, for instance, in my game against Taimanov, an extra piece proved insufficient to win: I was deceived by the 'shuffling' of the pieces. Although similar 'presents' were also made to me, one forgets about them, whereas one remembers one's own mistakes for a long time ...

Soon after the Championship I had my first trip abroad. With the USSR Student Team I set off for the World Championship in Sweden. There were a great number of new, colourful impressions, plus the special character of the 'Little Olympiad' – everyone was young and good-humoured, and got on well together, while the language barrier was overcome 'from the first move' – all this sticks in my mind for ever.

From the point of view of the result, our team, which consisted entirely of future Grandmasters, won easily. I was awarded the prize for the best result on board 3. Of interest was my game with Ivkov, which is given here.

The year 1956 ended somewhat dramatically. Despite a poor result in the match between Latvia and Estonia, I was considered favourite for the USSR Championship Semi-final in Tbilisi. I will not now undertake to explain what was at the bottom of it, but the tournament turned out to be extremely difficult for me. After 12 rounds my column of the tournament table showed one win (and goodness knows, the victory was not exactly convincing in an ending with four queens against Kasparian), two zeros and nine (!!) draws. In addition, the defeats were extremely vexing, being the result of bad blunders.

The one thing that cheered me up was a stubborn and successful defence as Black against Korchnoi in our game from the 12th round. Once again around the hundred-move mark (!), the game ended in a draw, and even now I do not know whether it was to this that I owed my spurt at the finish: 6 out of 7. As a result I succeeded in 'catching hold' of the last step on the finalists' train departing for Moscow.

However, it is not impossible that a part was played by a conversation with my trainer Koblents, who was appearing in the same Semi-final. He had played well in these 12 rounds to be amongst the leaders, and I jokingly said to him:

'Don't be upset Maestro! We will still be going to the Final together, only this time I will be your second'.

Towards the end Koblents faded, and in the Final 'tradition was maintained'.

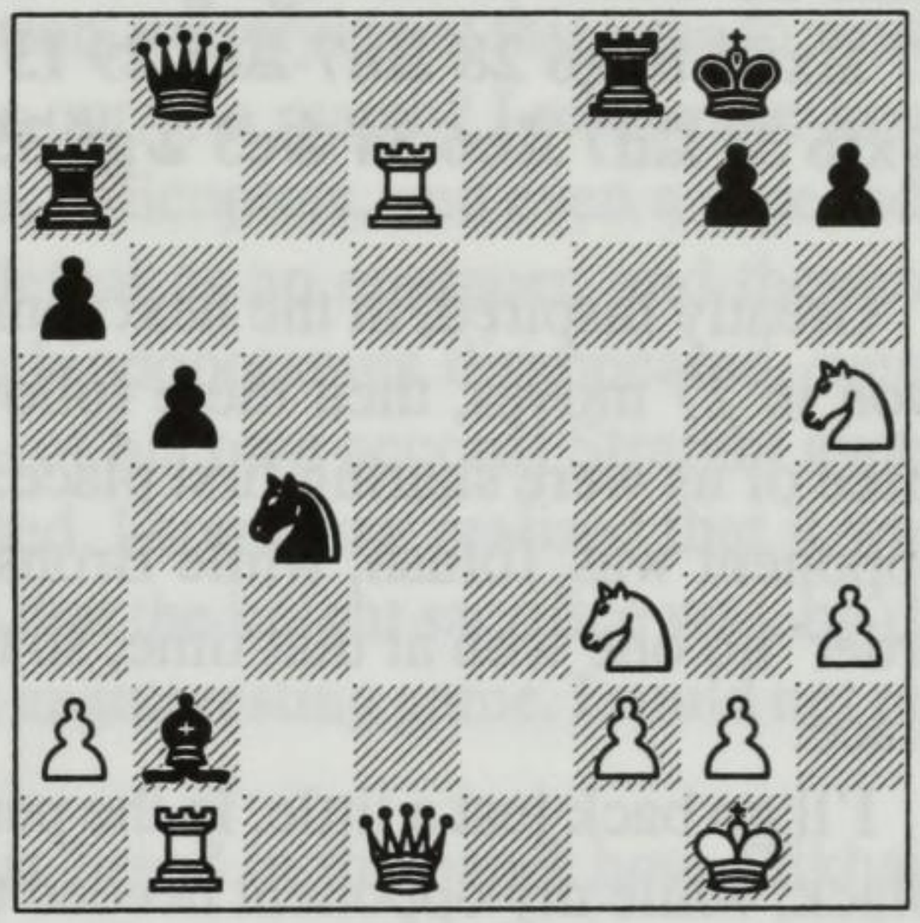
On to January 1957. The Championship of the Soviet Union was a strong tournament and very interesting indeed from the creative point of view. I do not say this because I succeeded in winning, but because that is how it really was. Tolush, for instance, gave several brilliant examples of attack; the experienced Bronstein and Keres played with enthusiasm; and it was here that the normally reserved Petrosian demonstrated that he was able – and how! – to play 'open' chess. He lost several (for him) games, but was able to win even more. I also succeeded in winning several interesting encounters.

Contrary to normal practice, the start of the tournament went well for me: the game with Aronson is given here. Then I won three further games in a row, including

one against the previous year's Champion Taimanov, and my first ever game against my idol Bronstein, whose play has always been for me an example, and – if you like – a yardstick. The fourth victory, against Bannik, continued the gallery of my games, already quite long, where my opponent set a trap and I fell into it, but in doing so I continued the variation for a further few moves, which allowed me to find a 'hole' in the trap.

I dropped my first half point in the fifth round, and, of course, it was in my game with Korchnoi, while in the sixth round I was drastically punished by Nezhmetdinov for incorrectly assessing the position.

The following could have been my best game in the Championship. After interesting complications this was the position reached:




**Tal – Antoshin**
*USSR Ch, Moscow 1957*

I sacrificed the exchange: **25 ♖xb2 ♘xb2 26 ♕d5+ ♔h8 27 ♕d4 ♖xd7 28 ♕xd7 ♖g8 29 ♘g5 h6 30 ♘f7+ ♔h7**, and here I thought that in the variation 31 ♕f5+ g6 32 ♕d7 gxh5 33 ♘g5+ ♔g6 34 ♕e6+ ♔xg5 35 g3 h4 36 f4+ ♔h5 I could not play 37 g2(!!!)-g4, because Black would take *en passant.* About the fact that the pawn was already on g3, and that the mate by 37 g3-g4 is quite legal, I somehow forgot.

After the game (not having found a mate, I quickly won back the exchange and agreed a draw) this was naturally pointed out to me by Geller, Bronstein, and someone else, and then I really went to pieces. There followed four draws in a row, which is nothing to boast about, and then a game against Boleslavsky adjourned in a poor position, which in the end I lost.

By the adjournment day my mood improved significantly, for I succeeded in winning an interesting game against Petrosian. Then things got better. I managed to defeat Keres (the game is given in the book), who was leading at the time, in

positional style, which was a surprise even to me, and went ahead together with Bronstein. In the following round, the 17th, I played a game which brought me half a point, enormous satisfaction, and a special prize.

**Tal – Aronin**
*USSR Ch, Tbilisi 1957*
Queen's Gambit

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 e3 ♘f6 5 ♘f3 ♘c6 6 a3 ♗d6 7 dxc5 ♗xc5 8 b4 ♗d6 9 ♗b2 0-0 10 ♕c2 ♘e5 11 0-0-0 ♕e7 12 ♘b5 ♘ed7 13 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 14 ♕c3 ♖e8 15 g4 ♕f8 16 ♗d3 ♘b6 17 g5 ♘a4 18 ♕c2 ♘xb2 19 ♔xb2 dxc4 20 gxf6 cxd3 21 ♕xd3 e5 22 ♘g5 g6 23 h4 ♗f5 24 e4 ♗g4 25 h5 ♖ad8 26 hxg6 ♖xd3 27 ♖xd3 hxg6 28 ♖h7 ♖c8 29 f3 ♖c6 30 ♖xf7 ♕xf7 31 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 32 fxg4 ♔xf6 33 ♖d7 ♖b6 34 ♔c3 ♔g5 35 a4 a6 36 ♔c4 ♔xg4 ½-½**

Greatly inspired, in the next round I sacrificed a piece against Gurgenidze and won in 27 moves, then there followed two draws, so that before the last round three of us were sharing first place: Bronstein, Tolush and myself. My last round opponent was Tolush, while Bronstein had to play Kholmov, against whom 'by order' no one won at that time, so that a draw would assure me of a share of first place.

I'll go back just a little. In the penultimate round I had drawn with Kholmov as Black, while my opponent needed to win in order to reach the Grandmaster norm for the second and last time. He tried very hard, but around move 30 the position had become so simplified that I allowed myself to begin peace negotiations. Kholmov very sharply rejected the offer and sank into thought for an hour, during which time I began imagining all sorts of terrible things. Then he raised his eyes from the board, said 'Draw!', and we began analysing. To the question, what had he been thinking about for so long, Kholmov replied: 'About how I will win tomorrow as Black against Bronstein ...'

JOURNALIST. *It is perhaps not convenient to interrupt you at such a crowning moment, but I would, nevertheless, like to know whether extraneous thoughts ever enter your head during a game?*

CHESS PLAYER. Oh yes! For instance, I will never forget my game with Grandmaster Vasiukov in one of the USSR Championships. We reached a very complicated position where I was intending to sacrifice a knight. The sacrifice was not altogether obvious, and there were a large number of possible variations, but when I conscientiously began to work through them, I found, to my horror,

that nothing would come of it. Ideas piled up one after another. I would transport a subtle reply by my opponent, which worked in one case, to another situation where it would naturally prove to be quite useless. As a result my head became filled with a completely chaotic pile of all sorts of moves, and the famous 'tree of variations', from which the trainers recommend that you cut off the small branches, in this case spread with unbelievable rapidity.

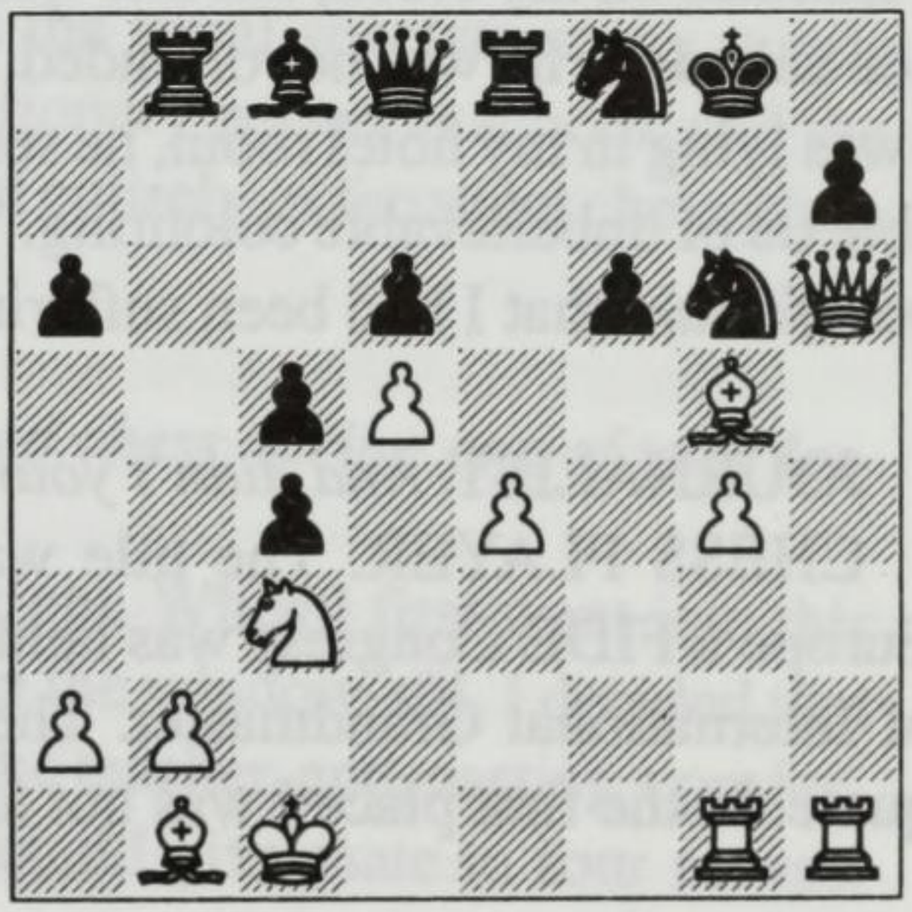
Then suddenly, for some reason, I remembered the classic couplet by Korney Ivanovich Chukovsky:

*Oh, what a difficult job it was*
*To drag out of the marsh the hippopotamus.*

I don't know from what associations this hippopotamus got onto the chessboard, but although the spectators were convinced that I was continuing to study the position, I, despite my humanitarian education, was trying at this time to work out: just how would you drag a hippopotamus out of a marsh? I remember how jacks figured in my thoughts, as well as levers, helicopters, and even a rope ladder. After lengthy consideration I admitted defeat as an engineer, and thought spitefully: 'Well, let it drown!' Suddenly the hippopotamus disappeared, went from the chessboard just as he had come on – of his own accord! Straight away the position did not appear to be so complicated. I somehow realised that it was not possible to calculate all the variations, and that the knight sacrifice was, by its very nature, purely intuitive. Since it promised an interesting game, I could not refrain from making it.

The following day, it was with pleasure that I read in the paper how Mikhail Tal, after carefully thinking over the position for 40 minutes, made an accurately-calculated piece sacrifice.

To return to the Championship; the last round game, taking into account the fact that I was White and that my opponent was the uncompromising Tolush, was bound to be a fighting game, and that is how it turned out.




**Tal – Tolush**
*USSR Ch, Tbilisi 1957*

**30 e5! ♖xe5** If 30...fxg5, then 31 ♗xg6 hxg6 32 ♕h8+ ♔f7 33 ♖h7+!, mating. **31 ♗xg6 ♖b7** Black cannot capture on g6 on account of the same variation, while on 31...♖xg5 there would follow 32 ♗xh7+ ♔f7 33 ♘e4. **32 ♘e4! fxg5 33 ♖f1 ♖xe4** There is no other way of meeting the threatened 34 ♘f6+. **34 ♗xe4 ♖g7 35 ♖f6 ♗xg4 36 ♖hf1 ♘d7 37 ♖xd6 ♕e7 38 ♖xa6 ♔h8 39 ♗xh7 ♘b8 40 ♗f5+ ♔g8 41 ♗e6+ ♗xe6 42 ♖xe6 1-0**

A year which had begun so well soon brought me grief. My father died, and for several months I was out of sorts. Even my final state exams were put off until the following spring. I returned to chess only in the summer, when I played in the World Students' Championship in Reykjavik. The USSR had a formidable team: two Grandmasters plus several strong masters, so that there was essentially no battle for the cup. I played well, and one of my games, that with Kolarov, is given here.

Two further team events followed: the Championship of Europe, and a semi-tourist, semi-serious trip to Italy, which was absolutely unforgettable. At the 12th Olympiad in Moscow the previous year, the Italian team had invited us to play a series of friendly matches. I hope that they will not be offended if I admit that, even at the board (we were, after all, barely adults), we were thinking of how we would wander around Venice, touch the stone of the ancient Coliseum, and visit La Scala and St. Peter's Cathedral.

Nevertheless, we played assiduously, winning all five matches. One of the games was rather unusual. Before the start of play my opponent, the master Sabadosh, a charming, kind man already advanced in years, came up to me and said that he had to his credit draws with Alekhine, Lasker and Euwe. In my youthful ignorance, I did not realise that this was a veiled offer of a draw, and since I had a cold, in reply I asked him to excuse me for the fact that I would spend as little time as possible at the board, so as to avoid infecting him. Indeed, I used only 7 minutes on my clock, but this was enough to win the game. To the credit of Signor Sabadosh he was not offended, and when, being unable to attend the banquet, I was lying in my hotel room, he sent me wine, fruit, and, as a souvenir, a fashionable tie of unbelievable colouring. When I returned home, the doctors established *post factum* that I had been suffering from pneumonia.

JOURNALIST. *And didn't your new title protect you?*

CHESS PLAYER. The title was indeed new. During the Championship of Europe a FIDE Congress was held, and our Federation proposed me for the title of International Grandmaster. The formal grounds for this were clearly inadequate. In the first place I was not an International Master, and secondly I had not

reached the Grandmaster norm in an international tournament. Against this, the argument was put forward that I was the USSR Champion, and had won the title in a very strong tournament. The decision taken by the Congress was truly Solomon-like: I was 'exchanged' for L. Evans and A. Bisguier, who had failed to make the norm by something like half a point, and we all three were raised to the rank of Grandmaster.

The following year, 1958, found me both at home, and away: the Championship of the Soviet Union was held in Riga.

JOURNALIST. *Is it better to play on your home ground or not?*

CHESS PLAYER. For footballers it is without doubt an advantage. Everything is familiar, and they have the support of the fans, but in chess it is by no means certain. On the strength of my experience, I can say: it is good to be 'at home' when one is playing well. If things are not working out so well, playing at home is more difficult. In addition, the Championship was a Zonal Tournament, so that I was therefore making my debut in the battle for the World Title.

JOURNALIST. *Were you planning to repeat your success, or ...?*

CHESS PLAYER. That's it – 'or'. I didn't think especially about first place, but with the tournament being the Zonal, Koblents and I made plans for me to finish in the first four so as to go forward to the Interzonal.

JOURNALIST. *Do you still set yourself targets, and plan your results?*

CHESS PLAYER. Only very relatively. Usually I leave this to my second, or my wife. They suggest to me a schedule, or, more accurately, three: a maximum programme, a minimum, and a so-called realistic programme. The maximum is nothing but wins, the minimum is a little over 50% (where defeats are not intended!), while the realistic programme is somewhere in between.

So, it was festival time in Riga. Apart from the usual spectators, my pupils were also watching the play. I was in my probationary period at school, and the class to which I taught literature consisted almost entirely of fanatical chess players.

JOURNALIST. *Is it true that they once played chess during one of your lessons?*

CHESS PLAYER. On this occasion you are right. When I first went into this class, there was a board with the pieces set out on the window-sill. I decided that this must be a new form of 'boot-licking' before the teacher, and, casting a professional glance over the board, I saw that White could give mate in four moves.

Then I committed a pedagogical mistake, turning my back on the class for two or three minutes while following a pupil who I had called up to the blackboard. When I turned round again to face the rest of the class, I saw that the position on the board had changed, and that White no longer had even an attack, never mind a mate in four. It was clear that the combatants preferred play to study. Having established who the players were, I severely demanded that the lads give me their mark books, which, as it happened, were simply lying on the teacher's desk. At the end of the lesson I returned them, and said:

'Let's come to and understanding: chess and studying don't go together!'

'Black' silently took back his mark book, but 'White' asked for my autograph. And in his mark book I had to write: 'Failed to find a mate in four during a literature lesson'. After this we became friends.

In the Championship I began with a game against Tolush. A hum of expectation greeted our appearance on the stage: our game from the last round of the previous year's Championship was still in people's minds. On this occasion Tolush was in poor form, and played badly. But I found, as early as the third round, that the battle promised to be very difficult for me also.

Against Boleslavsky in the King's Indian Defence I employed one of my rare opening innovations, quickly won a pawn, and obtained good winning chances. All I had to do was to make one prophylactic move, but this seemed fainthearted to me. I immediately occupied an open file with my rook, and Black's pieces came to life. At some point I considered that it was too early to offer a draw, but when I actually decided to speak, I saw that it was already too late.

JOURNALIST. *Your second successive defeat against Boleslavsky ... if someone defeats you. does this tend to repeat itself in subsequent games?*

CHESS PLAYER. It is more accurate to say that this happens after a defeat in the first game. In such cases there is indeed an unpleasant tradition of things being repeated.

JOURNALIST. *What in general do you think about the problem of revenge?*

CHESS PLAYER. There is an old Russian proverb: 'The father hit his son, not because he gambled, but because he tried to win back his losses.' In principle, striving for revenge – chess revenge! – is a good intention, but when it becomes an end in itself, and this has often happened to me, then you lose your sense of reality and of objectivity in assessing a position, and instead of revenge you have quite the opposite. I have no doubt that this is what explains, for instance, my catastrophic score against Korchnoi.

JOURNALIST. *But in that case, wouldn't it be more sensible to forget the past, and begin each game with the score at nil-nil?*

CHESS PLAYER. Of course it would, but emotions arise of their own accord.

Let us return to the Championship. Next I won a game against Averbakh, which is given here, and which provoked great arguments until the theorists showed that my piece sacrifice was inadequate, and that by an intermediate move White could have kept his material advantage.

JOURNALIST. *Just a minute! How was it that you sacrificed a piece, without special justification, against a Grandmaster? What were you counting on?*

CHESS PLAYER. The point is that all leading Grandmasters have a chess 'character', which is well known. Averbakh likes, and always heads for, positions where the situation is absolutely clear. Indeed, in our game this psychological trait manifested itself completely. On the very next move, in an attempt to clarify the situation, Averbakh simply returned the sacrificed piece. I do not know whether he did this deliberately, or whether he overlooked something and the game immediately transposed into a position of a clearly defined type, with Black having an extra pawn. Objectively speaking, the position could still have perhaps been held, but by now Averbakh was already in time-trouble, and he overlooked a little tactical stroke which led to great material losses. The sacrifice would have had no chance at all against players such as Korchnoi or Kholmov, who readily go in for sharp complications with the aim of keeping material which has been sacrificed against them.

JOURNALIST. *So you wouldn't have taken such a step against them?*

CHESS PLAYER. At any rate I would have thought about it longer, since at the board I could not see a direct refutation of the sacrifice.

Of the other encounters, I recall very well the one with Petrosian. I obtained the better position, but it was here that I realised that I still had much to learn in the way of strategy. The exchange sacrifice offered by Petrosian was at the same time both the strongest and the only move. Today, I would have declined it without hesitation, thus keeping the initiative, but on that occasion I won the exchange, and ... adjourned the game in a critical position. On resumption I slipped out, not without the assistance of my opponent.

JOURNALIST. *This was an example of Petrosian's famous sense of danger. How well is it developed in your case?*

CHESS PLAYER. Not at all, I'm afraid. I still don't understand how I have been able to go through certain tournaments without defeat.

The middle of the tournament turned out very badly for me. After refusing a draw, I blundered in the game with that same Korchnoi (there you are, trying for revenge!), and then this was repeated in my game with Bannik, against whom I had a clean score up till then. True, in this case there were 'collaborators' in my defeat. I caught a cold, had a slight temperature, and was given an injection of antibiotics. However, the nurse made a mistake, and gave me a sedative. My friends noticed that during the game (it took place on the day for adjournments) I was not my usual self. I didn't walk about at all, but all the time sat at my table, looking at the board with a melancholy gaze. I also played very limply. I got into a bad position, then Bannik made a hash of things. The game became level and I began to wonder whether I shouldn't try to win. I forgot about everything else, including my clock. It was only the demonstrator's stare that warned me that I had only a few seconds remaining and I seized the nearest pawn and pushed it forward, thus compromising my whole kingside. I lasted as far as the time control, but no further.

After this I found that my score was down to 50%, with almost half the tournament over, and with very little to hope for.

Perhaps it was this that allowed me to begin playing easily and calmly. I won several games in a row, and then Polugaevsky and I played a semi-dramatic, semi-comic game. In the time-scramble I lost part of my advantage, and in the adjourned position was a pawn up, but whether this was sufficient to win was not clear. In addition, we did not consider Polugaevsky's sealed move at all, which was to move his king towards mine.

The game continued, and then the moment arrived when I had to either exchange rooks and straight away agree to a draw, or else for no reason at all give up two pawns. I was very angry, partly because the previous day my opponent had offered me a draw in an inferior position, and partly because I had failed to guess his sealed move; without really thinking, I chose the second path, whereupon it took desperate efforts on my part to gain the draw.

Even so, my fight to reach the top four and the Interzonal was going well. Towards the finish the pace of the leaders had slowed considerably, and after a win in the penultimate round, I went ahead together with Petrosian, with Bronstein half a point, and Averbakh and Spassky a point behind. One of us had to go! The piquancy of the situation was increased by the fact the last round pairings were Petrosian-Averbakh, myself against Spassky, and Bronstein-Korchnoi, so that no-one ventured to predict the results.

It turned out that, of the three games, only one was to be decisive. My rivals quickly agreed draws, whereas Spassky and I were engaged in a battle not for life, but to the death. Strictly speaking, a draw would have suited me: firstly, this

would have enabled me to share first place, and secondly, I was playing Black. But Spassky had no desire at all for a play-off match with Averbakh for fourth place. The result was a sharp variation of the Nimzo-Indian, then at some point Spassky did not play as energetically as was possible and an equal position was reached. When I offered a draw, he refused. This was possibly because he had a score of two wins and two draws against me, but it seemed to me that Boris knew about my carefully-guarded secret – I was still unwell.

Be that as it may, but I immediately made a bad move, and got into difficulties which grew and grew. Somewhere before the time control I could have gained a draw by going into a rook ending a pawn down, but instead I chose a heavy-piece ending where my king was in danger.

We analysed until five o'clock in the morning. There appeared to be no direct win for White, but my position was highly unpleasant. Then my second sent me off to sleep for about three hours: the resumption was in the morning, at nine.

My difficulties began while still on the approach to the tournament hall. Despite the fact that it was a weekday, there was a mass of fans around the entrance, and it was practically impossible to fight one's way through. My pupils, who had simply skipped their lessons, were also gathered there.

The game was resumed. Out of the corner of my eye I could see Petrosian in a new suit, white shirt and tie, apparently all ready for his interview as Champion. In the small buffet behind the stage Spassky was feverishly drinking kefir[1] – it seemed that he too had only slept a little.

For the first six moves or so a forced variation was followed, and then up to a certain point Spassky played very well; only six months later was it found how he could have won. In over-the-board play, after a sleepless night, he was unable to solve this difficult problem. In addition, he was not in the best of moods – in the penultimate round he had suffered a defeat.

After we had played about another fifteen moves there were still only two possible results: either Spassky would at any moment force a draw, or else he would convert his advantage into a win. Even so, my position was improving 'inch by inch', and finally White was faced with a choice: he had to force a draw, or else the position would become more complicated, and the number of possible results would be increased to three.

Spassky did not force a draw, but after a couple more moves, with both kings now under fire, he offered one in a somewhat changed voice. To be honest, I was embarrassed. In the first place, I had always held a certain sympathy for Boris. Secondly, I very much wanted to play in the lightning tournament which was just

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1 A sour milk product, similar to yoghurt – *Translator's note*.

about to begin. However, everyone, myself included, had been greatly carried away by the game, and besides, to agree a draw would have been unethical from the chess point of view: for the first time in the game I had the chance to play for a win, and it was just now, and not a minute earlier, that the game would have been concluded.

All this flashed through my mind for 30-40 seconds, and then I declined the offer. Immediately I saw how Spassky, who always plays, I would say, with theatrical calmness, began to get nervous. It became clear that it was now difficult for him to decide on the correct continuation, and indeed it was all over within five moves, with my king, which had broken out of captivity, taking part in the execution of his white colleague.

JOURNALIST. *In short, if he had agreed to a draw yesterday, you would have agreed today ...*

CHESS PLAYER. Exactly!

JOURNALIST. *I realise that an enemy in life, and an 'enemy' at the board are different notions, but do any human feelings towards the opponent – respect, enmity, liking – have an influence on the course of a game?*

CHESS PLAYER. Naturally! Although sometimes in a strange way. For instance, neither Spassky nor I have the slightest willingness to play against opponents for whom we have a feeling of enmity, whereas Botvinnik and Korchnoi try to rouse this feeling in themselves before a game.

Strange though it may seem, it was after our tragic encounter in the Championship that Boris and I became friends. He put himself in my place, and realised that it was not personal enmity towards him that caused me to reject his offer of a draw. I think that he would have done the same, if he had been in my place.

The result of this game proved to be a surprise to everyone: to Averbakh, who had been hoping against hope for a play-off match with Spassky, to Petrosian, to Spassky, and, for all my optimism, to myself.

JOURNALIST. *And how did the fans react?*

CHESS PLAYER. They went wild!

Even so, it is always more difficult for me to play in Riga than anywhere else. What I have in mind is the Championship of the Republic. If, to the rest of the world, I was already twice USSR Champion, International Grandmaster and so on, to my colleagues at home I was still the same Misha. Therefore I could not expect any special deference at the board, and in the Latvian Championship two months later I only took third place. In fact, I obtained the highest percentage of

points in all my appearances in the Championship, 16 out of 19, but two others scored 17!

The fate of the tournament was decided by an incident which can only be called an anecdote. Before my game with Gipslis I was preparing for my University State Exam in Russian. This included Old Church Slavonic, Old Russian, Dialectology, and God knows what else, and so I was surrounded by some ten kilos of specialist literature. But suddenly the door bell rang, and the postman arrived with, besides the rest of the mail, the latest issue of *Shakhmatny Bulletin*. I decided that fate itself was calling on me to relax, so I lay down in a hot bath and began reading the magazine. Straight away I came across an article by N. Krogius on a topical variation of the Sicilian Defence. At that time I readily played this line both as White and Black, and here I suddenly read: 'Recently Black has frequently adopted the new continuation ...e5'. There followed two games, one of which Black won, while the second was drawn.

That's excellent, I thought, I'll have a quick draw in this variation with Gipslis, and then return to Philology.

As if it had been pre-arranged, inside 5 minutes we had played the moves of the variation given in the article, but when I made the 'recommended' move ...e5, a thought suddenly struck me: but what if White plays simply ♗c4? Gipslis, however, did not give me time to torture myself mentally, but straight away made this move.

The game continued for the full five hours, after which I had a hopeless position, and all that I achieved was an adjournment.

The following morning I passed my exam, but resigned the game, whereupon we began analysing it. The first question that Gipslis asked was:

'Didn't you get the bulletin then?'

'Yes, why shouldn't I have?'

Here he took the bulletin out of his briefcase, showed me the move ...e5, then turned over a page (!), whereupon I read the very first line: 'However, by answering ...e5 with ♗c4, White sets his opponent difficult problems.'

Since then I have never prepared for a game while lying in a hot bath.

However, there was no real need to feel distressed. Shortly after this I went away to the south on the insistence of my doctors, who had detected some mystical (as it turned out) spots in my lungs, and after I had been detained for a couple of weeks in a sanatorium, Koblents arrived, and we began making unhurried preparations for the Interzonal Tournament. Then a telegram from our Chess Federation arrived: 'We would very much like you to play in the World Students' Team Championship, only in the most important matches'. I was really pleased. I was bored with the resort, and I felt fine, so I flew straight away to Moscow. True,

the most important matches proved to be all ten, and I enjoyed playing them, while for the right to play the tenth game, Spassky and I drew lots.

Incidentally, on this occasion the main burden was borne by the top two boards, and when the following year Boris and I did not take part, our team dropped back, thus suggesting that the problem of preparing our young players was problem number one. A successful solution was found two years later.

### Game 8

**Khasin – Tal**

*USSR Championship, Leningrad 1956*

Sicilian Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **c5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **♘c6** |
| **3** | **d4** | **cxd4** |
| **4** | **♘xd4** | **♘f6** |
| **5** | **♘c3** | **d6** |
| **6** | **♗c4** | **e6** |
| **7** | **0-0** | **a6** |

Black immediately prepares for active queenside play. 7...♗e7 followed by castling is a more solid defence.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **8** | **♗e3** | **♕c7** |
| **9** | **♗b3** | **♗e7** |
| **10** | **f4** | **b5** |

Black consistently carries out his plan.

**11 f5!**

The strongest continuation, assuring White a certain positional advantage. After the plausible 11 ♕f3, the game Levin-Zhukhovitsky (Odessa 1952) continued 11...♗b7 12 a3 0-0 13 g4 ♘xd4 14 ♗xd4 d5 15 e5 ♗c5 16 ♖ad1 ♕b6 17 ♘e2 ♘e4 with a sharp game, not unfavourable for Black.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **11** | **...** | **♘xd4** |
| **12** | **♕xd4** | |

On 12 ♗xd4 there could have followed 12...b4 13 ♘e2 e5 14 ♗e3 0-0 with roughly equal chances.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | **...** | **0-0** |
| **13** | **fxe6** | |

White should not have been in a hurry to make this exchange; 13 ♖ad1 was stronger. The tempting 13 a4 would get White nowhere after 13...♗d7 for example: 14 axb5 axb5 15 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 16 fxe6 fxe6 17 ♘d5 ♘xd5 18 ♗xd5 ♖f8.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **13** | **...** | **♗xe6** |

On 13...fxe6 there could have followed 14 ♘d5 ♘xd5 15 ♗xd5 with a slightly better position for White.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **14** | **♖ad1** | **♖ac8** |
| **15** | **♔h1** | **♖fd8** |
| **16** | **♘d5** | |

With this move White radically prevents the advance ...d5 but in doing so he blocks his light-squared bishop's diagonal.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **16** | **...** | **♗xd5** |
| **17** | **exd5** | |

If 17 ♗xd5 then Black can capture the c-pawn.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **17** | **...** | **♘d7** |
| **18** | **♕f4** | **♗f6** |
| **19** | **♗d4** | **♖e8** |

The continuation 19...♗xd4 20 ♖xd4 (20 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 21 ♖xd4 fails,

of course, to 21...♖f8) 20...♘e5 appeared tempting, but after 21 c3 ♖e8 22 ♗c2 it is not clear how Black can strengthen his position, whereas White is able to increase his pressure on the kingside.

**20 c3 ♖e7**

The 'active' 20...♖e2 fails to 21 ♕g4 with a double attack on e2 and f6.

**21 ♗c2 ♗xd4**

**22 ♕h4**

The simple 22 ♖xd4 was better.

**22 ... ♘f8**

**23 ♖xd4 ♖e2**

**24 ♗f5 ♖ce8**

It becomes clear that the initiative is in Black's hands.

**25 ♖b4 ♖d2**

**26 ♗e4 ♕e7**

26...♘g6 deserved serious consideration.

**27 ♕e1?**

White blunders. He should have played 27 ♕f4 ♖e2 28 ♕f3. Now Black cannot, of course, capture the bishop due to 28...♖xe4? 29 ♖xe4 ♕xe4 30 ♕xf7+ and mate in two moves. If 28...♖d2, then there once again follows 29 ♕f4, while 28...a5 is not good, since White can reply 29 ♕xe2 axb4 30 ♖e1 etc.

**27 ... ♖xd5**

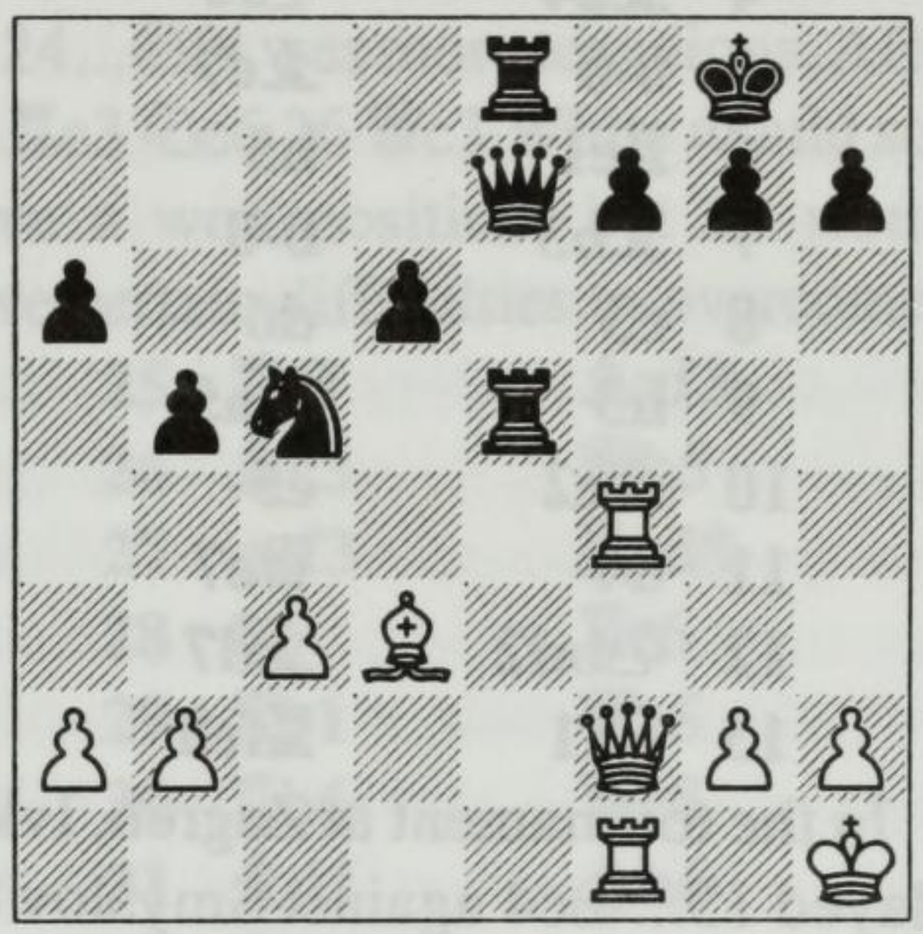
**28 ♕f2**

28 ♗xd5 ♕xe1 29 ♗xf7+ ♔h8 30 ♖f4 fails to 30...♘g6!, but not 30...♖e7? in view of 31 ♗c4!

**28 ... ♖e5**

**29 ♗d3 ♘d7**

**30 ♖f4 ♘c5!** *(D)*




**31 ♖xf7**

This loses quickly, but after 31 ♗b1 ♖e2 32 ♕f3 ♖e1 Black should also win.

**31 ... ♘xd3**

**32 ♕f3 ♖e1!**

**33 ♕d5**

After 33 ♖xe7 Black can win by 33...♖xf1+ 34 ♕xf1 ♖xe7 when there is no defence against the threat of 35...♖e1.

**33 ... ♕xf7**

The shortest path to victory.

**34 ♕xf7+ ♔h8**

**35 ♔g1 ♖xf1+**

**36 ♕xf1 ♖e1**

**0-1**

Game 9

**Tal – Ivkov**

*Student Olympiad, Uppsala 1956*

Ruy Lopez

**1 e4 e5**

**2 ♘f3 ♘c6**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **3** | **♗b5** | **a6** |
| **4** | **♗a4** | **♘f6** |
| **5** | **0-0** | **♗e7** |
| **6** | **♖e1** | **b5** |
| **7** | **♗b3** | **0-0** |
| **8** | **c3** | **d6** |
| **9** | **h3** | **♘a5** |
| **10** | **♗c2** | **c5** |
| **11** | **d4** | **♕c7** |
| **12** | **♘bd2** | **♗d7** |
| **13** | **♘f1** | **♖fe8** |

In the tournament at Zagreb, Ivkov played 13...♘c4 against Smyslov but got the worse of it after 14 ♕e2 ♖fe8 15 b3 ♘b6 16 dxe5 dxe5 17 c4! ♗c6 18 a4! It is possible that on 13...♘c4 the simple 14 ♘e3 is also strong.

**14 ♘e3**

This position occurred in the games Tal-Kholmov and Boleslavsky-Kholmov from the 23rd USSR Championship. In both games Black continued 14...♗f8; Boleslavsky succeeded in obtaining an advantage by 15 b4 cxd4 16 cxd4 ♘c6 (16...♘c4 17 ♘xc4 bxc4 18 ♗g5) 17 ♗b2, and White won quickly. Ivkov evidently knew about this, and in the present game he chooses a different continuation.

**14 ... g6**
**15 b4**

An analogous move to the one made in the game mentioned above, and apparently the strongest in this position. As was shown by a number of games in the Zagreb tournament, other continuations do not promise White anything genuine. For instance, in the game Smyslov-Gligorić there followed 15 dxe5 dxe5 16 ♘h2 ♖ad8 17 ♕f3 ♗e6 18 ♘hg4 ♘xg4 19 hxg4 ♘c4 20 ♘d5 ♗xd5 21 exd5 ♘b6 and on the 30th move the players agreed to a draw.

**15 ... cxb4**
**16 cxb4 ♘c4**

After 16...♘c6 White could quietly complete his development by 17 ♗b2 when his pressure along the a1-h8 diagonal gives him a big positional advantage.

**17 ♘xc4 bxc4**
**18 ♖e3**

Now White threatens to transfer his bishop to c3, after which he will have the better chances both on the queenside and on the kingside. If Black replies 18...c3, then after 19 ♖b1 the passed pawn will sooner or later be captured. The strongest continuation was 18...♖ab8 and on 19 ♗d2 exd4 20 ♘xd4 d5 21 e5 ♘e4 22 ♗xe4 dxe4 23 ♖xe4 ♗xb4 24 ♗f4, though even then White keeps some initiative.

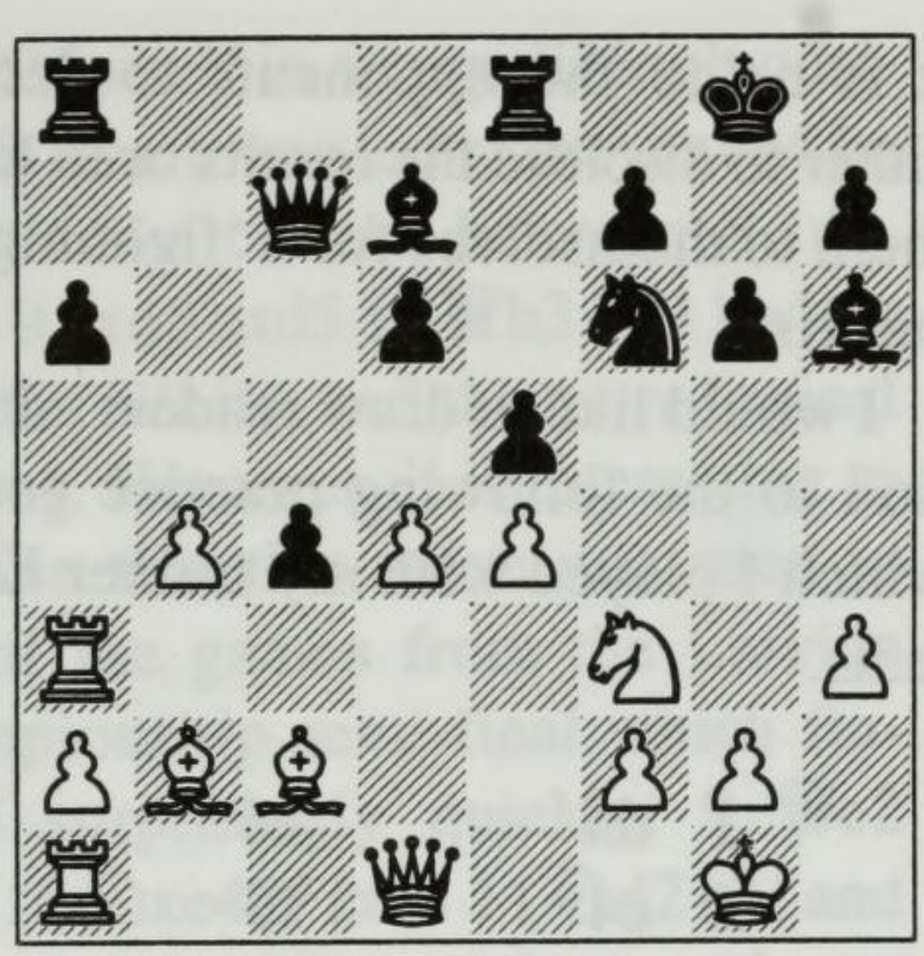
In the game Black chooses a tempting, but weaker continuation.

**18 ... ♗f8**
**19 ♗b2!**

Weaker would be 19 ♗d2 exd4 20 ♘xd4 d5 when Black has no difficulties.

**19 ... ♗h6**
**20 ♖a3** *(D)*

White threatens to win a pawn by 21 dxe5 dxe5 22 ♖a5 c3 23 ♖c5. After 20...a5 21 bxa5 ♖xa5 22 ♖xa5 ♕xa5 23 ♕e1 the ending is clearly in White's favour. Black's strongest move was



*B*

20...♗b5, to which I intended to reply 21 d5, keeping a positional advantage (Black's bishop on h6 is badly placed, and is unable to take part in the defence of his queenside).

**20 ... ♕b7?**

Black begins a faulty combination.

**21 dxe5 ♕xb4**

**22 ♕d4**

Ivkov had reckoned only on 22 ♖b1 dxe5 23 ♗c1 ♕f8 24 ♗xh6 ♕xh6 (24...♕xa3? 25 ♗g5) 25 ♖b6 ♖e6 with a probable draw. After the move in the game Black's position is lost.

**22 ... ♘h5**

No better is 22...♖ab8 23 ♖b1 dxe5 24 ♘xe5 ♕d2 in view of the simple 25 ♘xd7 when White comes out a piece ahead. On 22...♖fb8 23 ♖b1 ♘e8 White could play 24 exd6 ♗g7 25 e5, when 25...♘xd6 fails to 26 ♗c1.

**23 exd6**

Tempting was 23 e6!? ♗g7 24 exf7+ ♔xf7 25 ♕d5+ ♔e7 26 ♗xg7 but after 26...♘xg7! (not 26...♕xa3 27 ♗d4) White has nothing concrete, despite his strong position.

**23 ... ♗g7**

**24 e5 ♗c6**

24...♘f4 was more tenacious. After 25 ♖e3 ♘e6 26 ♕c3 White would still have a won position, but he would have certain difficulties to overcome.

**25 ♖e3 ♗xf3**

**26 ♗c3 ♕b5**

**27 gxf3 ♖ad8**

**28 f4 ♖e6**

**29 ♖b1 ♕c6**

**30 ♖b6 ♕c8**

**31 ♗d1 ♗h6**

**32 ♗xh5 gxh5**

**33 f5 1-0**

Game 10

**Koblents – Tal**

*Training Game, Riga 1957*

Dutch Defence

**The Three Rooks' Sacrifice**

Very often, while delivering lectures, I have to answer certain questions: 'Could you explain how you prepare yourself for tournaments?' or similarly 'What is the best way to prepare for important competitions?'

I have to say at once that ready-made formulae do not exist. The only possible solution, which must be strictly kept in mind, is that one should always be conscious of one's individual style and consider future plans to develop it.

Twenty years ago Botvinnik proposed his own system to help developing chess players in their preparation.

In his system, great attention was drawn to two points. Firstly, theoretical preparation: mainly analysis of specific variations, and secondly, psychological preparation. It is interesting to note that Botvinnik owned files containing the games of all possible future opponents. Botvinnik would also give great importance to his physical preparation for important tournaments.

Nowadays, with the considerable improvement in chess standards, this system is somewhat out of date. For example, it is not quite clear whether it is correct to play intensively in tournament after tournament. Botvinnik's answer is 'no' and he also confirms this by not playing too often. On the other hand Grandmaster Gligorić plays very often and I have to add that, even by doing so, he never loses his good form.

One other question: 'When ought one experiment?' It is no secret that most competitions are aimed at qualification or are held for some other important competitive reason, and a tournament's narrow frame of calculation does not allow the chess player to use his full imagination – it is not easy to play in a style which one would use in a practice game. In this last sentence we perhaps discover the answer to all our previous questions!?

Indeed, when chess players meet in training games, which do not decide qualification or other achievements, they can try out some of the most interesting or dangerous variations, and it is up to the opponents to decide either to disclose the results or to keep them to themselves for a 'fight night' surprise.

I would like to draw readers' attention to the following practice game, which I played with my trainer Koblents.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **d4** | **e6** |
| **2** | **c4** | **f5** |

It is possible that many chess players will say: 'Of course this must be a training game' – indeed, in tournaments the Dutch Defence is not used very often. However, in this game we wanted to check on Soviet Master Ilyin-Zhenevsky's suggested plan for this defence, and because of the result I am not going to give my signature to a document agreeing to stop playing the Dutch Defence forever.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **3** | **♘f3** | **♘f6** |
| **4** | **g3** | **♗e7** |
| **5** | **♗g2** | **0-0** |
| **6** | **0-0** | **d6** |
| **7** | **♘c3** | **♕e8** |
| **8** | **♖e1** | |

The idea of this move, followed by e4, was suggested by Steinitz a long time ago. Recently the game Keres-Simagin brought a great win for the Estonian Grandmaster.

**8 ... ♕g6**

At first it seems that this move does not counter White's plan. In the above-mentioned game Black played the usual 8...♕h5 and after 9 e4 fxe4 10 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 11 ♖xe4 ♘c6 12 ♗f4

found himself in a very difficult position. If Black wanted to prevent e4 he would have chosen between 8...d5, when 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♕b3 c6 11 e4! is good for White, and the more logical 8...♘e4. However, it is interesting to mention that this move was used in one of the games from the Latvian Championship semi-final which finished surprisingly quickly: 9 ♕c2 ♕g6 10 ♘xe4?? fxe4 11 ♘d2 e3! and White resigned because he must lose a rook. Instead of 10 ♘xe4??, better is 10 ♗e3.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **9** | **e4** | **fxe4** |
| **10** | **♘xe4** | **♘xe4** |
| **11** | **♖xe4** | **♘c6** |

The rook cannot be touched because of 12 ♘h4. Instead of the text-move 11...e5 has been played often, but, as shown by practice, after 11...e5 White's position is better. The text is Black's defensive idea – it prepares ...e5.

**12 ♖e3**

This move stops Black's freeing manoeuvre ...e5. After the game my opponent showed me this interesting variation: 12...e5 13 dxe5 ♗g4 14 exd6 ♗xd6. One may get the impression that Black's initiative is worth a pawn, but then would follow 15 c5! ♗e7 16 b4 ♗f6 17 ♗b2! – an interesting repetition of the combinative theme. Now it becomes clear that the rook's task lies on the third rank.

The same rook also had a very active life in the variation we played in the game.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | **...** | **♗f6** |
| **13** | **d5** | **exd5** |
| **14** | **cxd5** | **♘e5** |
| **15** | **♘xe5** | **♗xe5** |
| **16** | **♖b3** | |

If Black now had to lose a tempo for the defence of the queenside, then his position after 17 ♗e3 and 18 ♖c1 would be very sad.

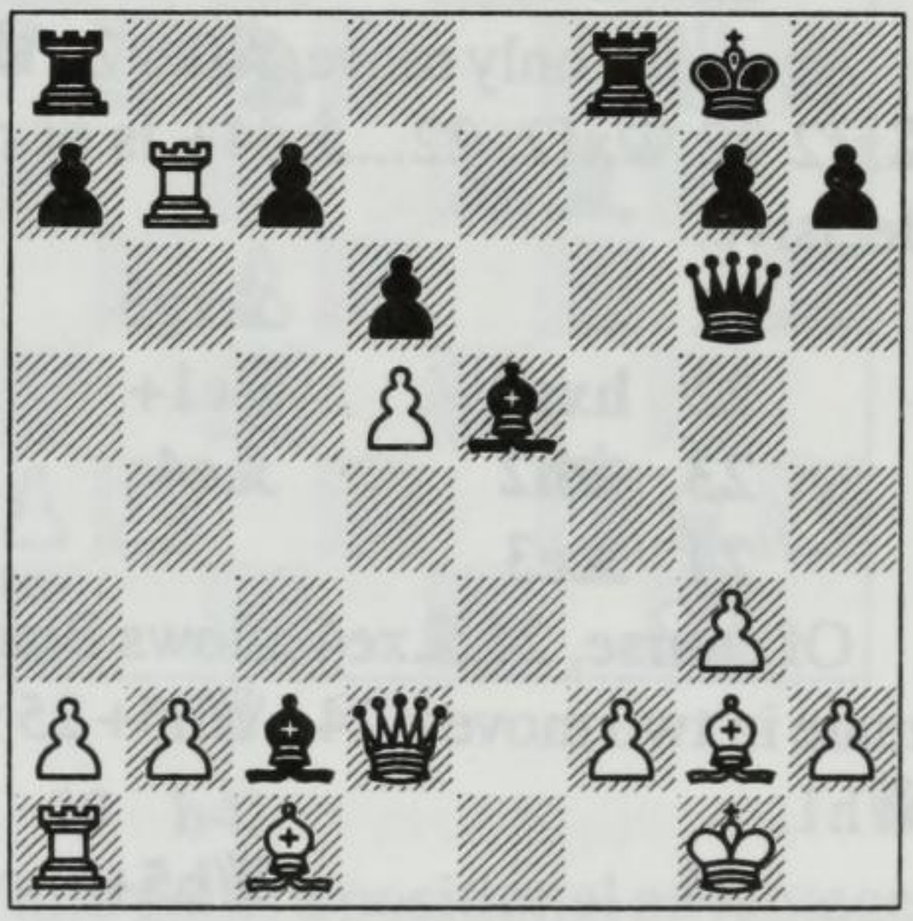
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **16** | **...** | **♗f5** |

16...♗g4 was also an interesting continuation, forcing 17 f3.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **17** | **♖xb7** | **♗c2** |
| **18** | **♕d2** *(D)* | |

White naturally does not want to place his queen on the e-file where she would always be in the firing line of Black's rooks.

*B*



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **18** | **...** | **♖ae8** |
| **19** | **♖xc7** | **♗d3** |

Black could lose prematurely after 19...♗d4 20 ♕xd4 ♖e1+ 21 ♗f1 ♗d3 22 ♗h6!

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **20** | **♕b4!** | |

The only move to save the game. White prevents 20...♗d4, after which

would follow 21 ♗e3. On the other hand a distinct weakness now appears at f2, and as a natural reaction to the text-move I had the idea of checking the tempting sacrifice of the rook: 20...♖xf2!? 21 ♔xf2 ♕f6+. It is easy to see that White cannot interpose by 22 ♗f4 because of 22...♗d4+ with mate to follow (23 ♔f3 ♗e2 mate), and after 22 ♗f3 would come 22...♗d4+ 23 ♔g2 ♗f1+! So White is left with only one move: 22 ♔g1 ♗d4+ 23 ♔h1 and although Black has a very active position, we can describe it as one which promises a lot but gives very little. However, Black's text-move looks very promising.

**20 ... a5**

**21 ♕a4**

Again the only move. After 21 ♕xa5 ♖xf2 22 ♔xf2, 22...♗d4+ is at once decisive.

**21 ... ♗xg3**

**22 hxg3 ♖e1+**

**23 ♔h2 ♗e4**

**24 ♗e3**

Of course, 24 ♗xe4 allows Black to mate in two moves: 24...♕h5+ 25 ♔g2 ♕h1.

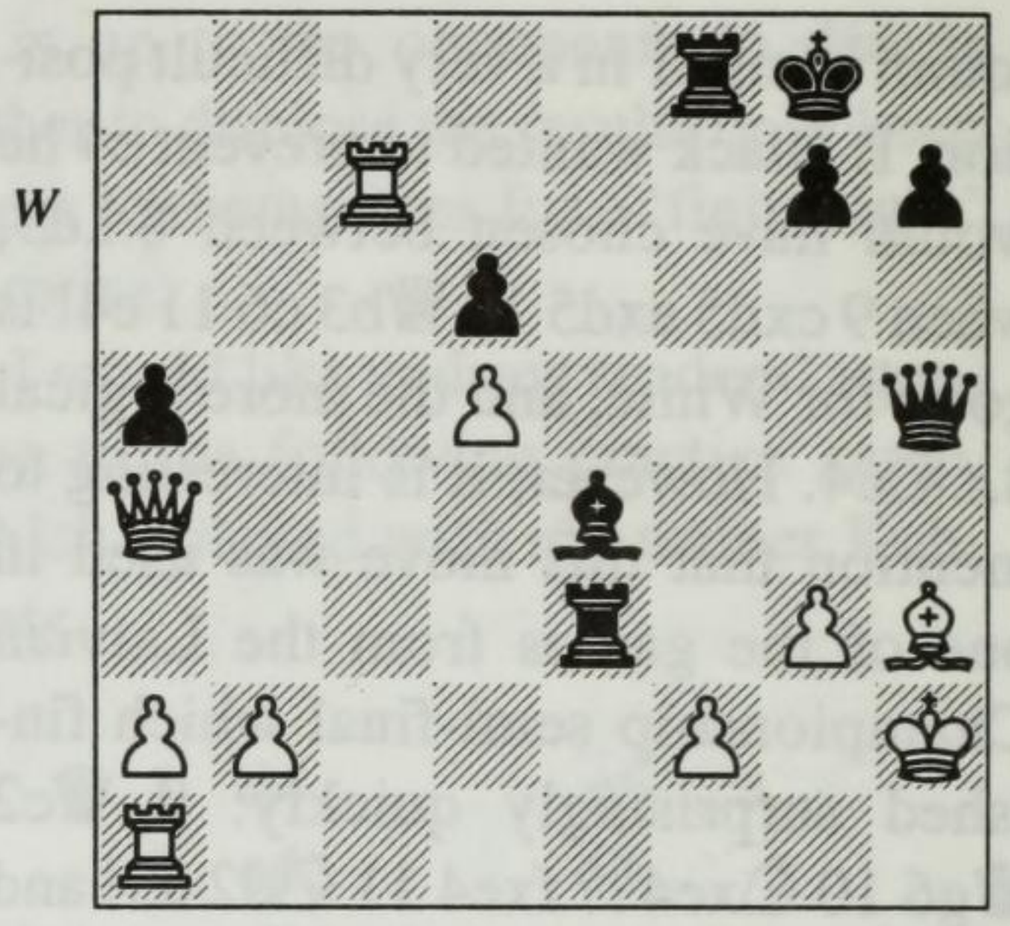
**24 ... ♕h5+**

**25 ♗h3 ♖xe3** *(D)*

The beautiful 25...♗g2 achieves nothing because of 26 ♕g4.

White's position seems hopeless – all Black's pieces are aimed at White's king, but suddenly White's distant rook comes unexpectedly into the fight.

**26 ♖xg7+**




I have to say that I had looked at this move earlier and thought 26...♔h8 a satisfactory answer, but after a closer examination of the position I found that there would follow 27 ♕d4!! and after 27...♖xf2+, 28 ♔g1. What an interesting position – Black is attacking but White checkmates the attacker! So I had to change my initial decision.

**26 ... ♔xg7**

**27 ♕d4+ ♔g8**

Black has nothing decisive after 27...♖f6 28 ♕xe3 ♖h6 29 g4 ♕e5+ 30 ♕g3 ♕xb2 31 ♖e1.

**28 ♕xe3 ♗f5**

**29 g4 ♗xg4**

**30 ♖g1!**

After 30 ♕g3 Black exchanges queens and gets a very good endgame by taking the pawn on f2.

**30 ... ♖xf2+**

First we get the impression that White forgot about this possibility, but later we realise that all is very well calculated.

**31 ♔h1 ♕xd5+**

**32 ♗g2 ♕h5+**

**33 ♗h3 ♕d5+**
**34 ♗g2 ♕d2**

The last trap. If 35 ♕e8+ ♔g7 36 ♕e7+ ♖f7 and Black wins because of the threat 37...♕h6+.

**35 ♕xd2 ♖xd2**
**36 ♗f3 h5**
**37 ♗xg4 hxg4**
**38 ♖xg4+ ♔f7**
**39 ♖a4 ½-½**

Game 11

**Aronson – Tal**

*USSR Championship, Moscow 1957*

Dutch Defence

**1 d4 e6**
**2 c4 f5**
**3 ♘f3 ♘f6**
**4 ♘c3 ♗e7**
**5 g3 0-0**
**6 ♗g2 d6**
**7 0-0 ♕e8**
**8 ♖e1 ♕g6**
**9 e4 fxe4**
**10 ♘xe4 ♘xe4**
**11 ♖xe4 ♘c6**

All this has been met before on numerous occasions. 11...♕xe4 fails, of course, to 12 ♘h4.

**12 ♕e2**

The retreat of the rook to e3 was worth considering. Then 12...e5 does not work because of the following variation: 13 dxe5 ♗g4 14 exd6 ♗xd6 15 c5 ♗e7 16 b4 ♗f6 17 ♗b2, with advantage to White.

**12 ... ♗f6**
**13 ♗d2**

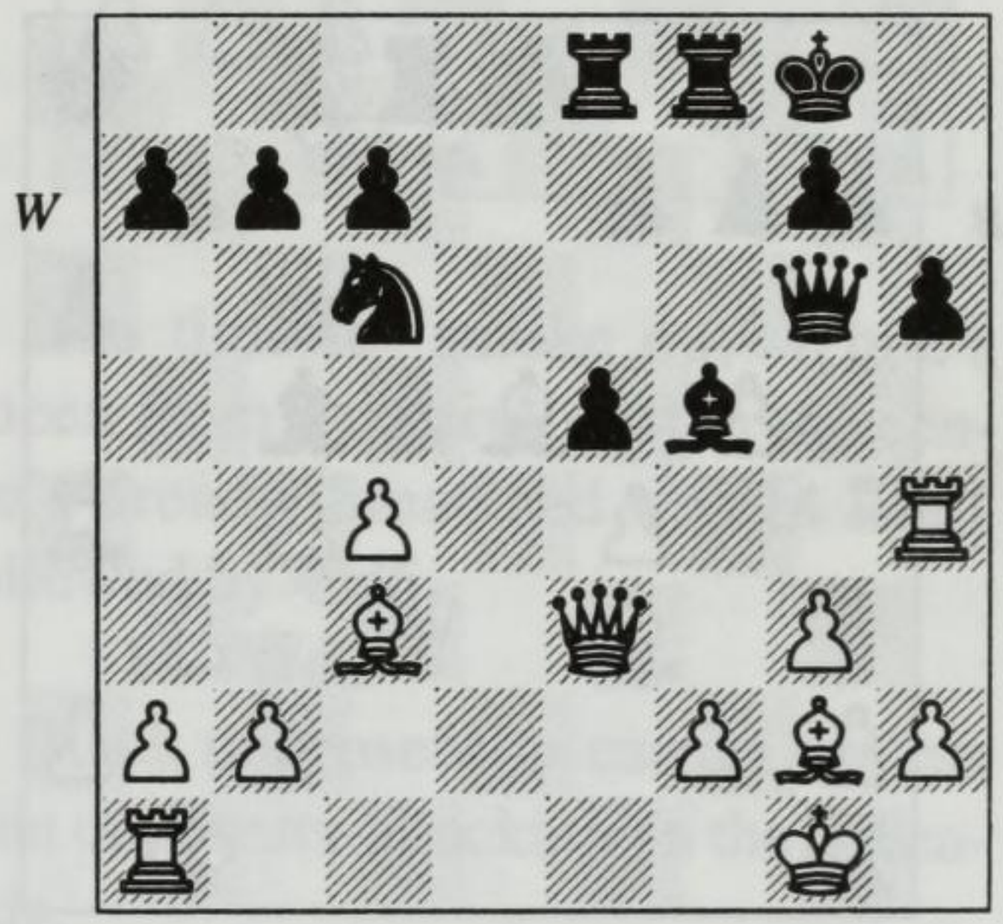
13 ♗f4 fails to 13...d5.

**13 ... e5**
**14 dxe5 dxe5**

This move was provoked by a desire to complicate the game, although it involves a certain degree of risk. After 14...♘xe5 15 ♗c3 the two sides would have roughly equal chances.

**15 ♗c3 ♗f5**
**16 ♘h4 ♗xh4**
**17 ♖xh4 ♖ae8**
**18 ♕e3 h6** *(D)*

18...e4 is weak in view of 19 ♖e1 when it is difficult to hold the pawn on e4.




**19 b4!**

White gains a positional advantage on the queenside. With his next move Black attempts to exploit the bad position of the white rook on h4.

**19 ... ♕f6**
**20 b5 ♘d8**

On 20...g5 White could have sacrificed the exchange by 21 bxc6 gxh4 22 cxb7 etc.

**21 ♗d5+?**

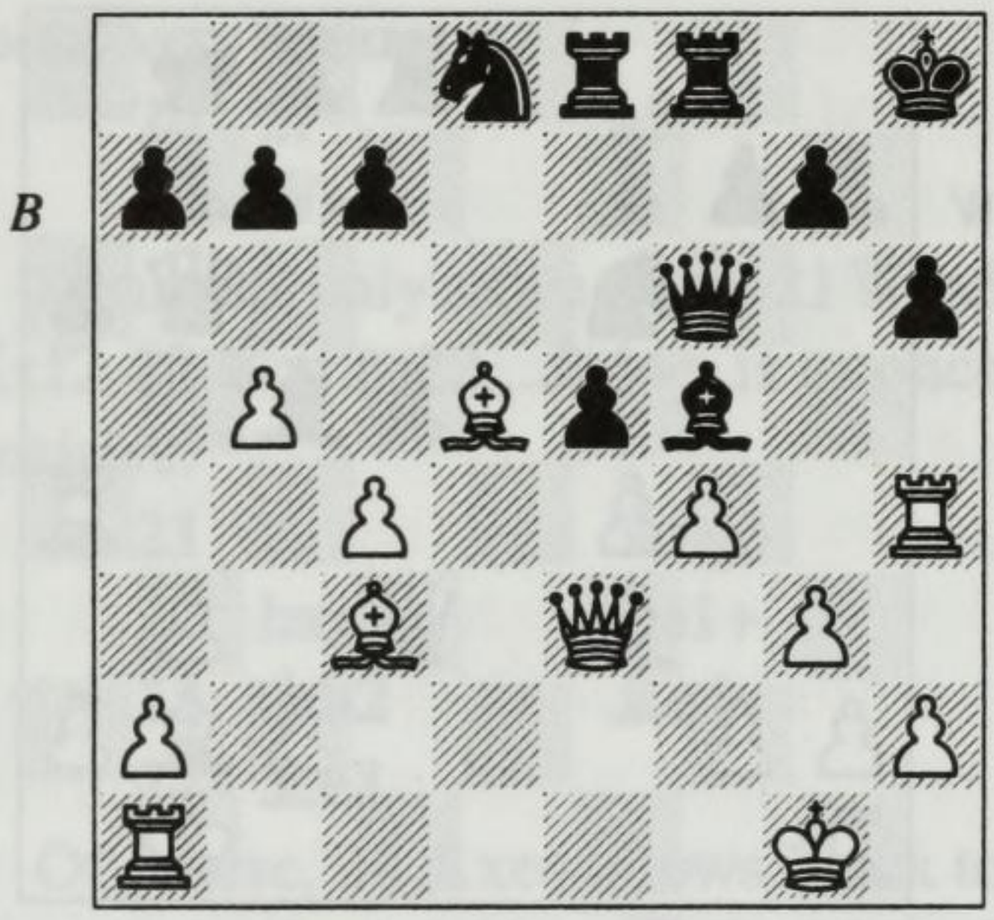
The beginning of an incorrect plan. He should have played 21 c5 and then ♖a4. In this case White would have been able to show that 14...dxe5 was perhaps too risky.

**21 ... ♔h8**

This is more accurate than 21...♔h7 on which there could follow 22 ♗e4 taking play into a favourable ending.

After the text, 22 ♗b4 is not good for White in view of 22...g5 23 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 24 ♖e4 c6! 25 ♖xe5 cxd5, and White cannot capture the pawn (26 cxd5) because of 26...♘f7.

**22 f4?** *(D)*



Now the picture changes rapidly – Black firmly seizes the initiative. Better was 22 c5 on which Black was planning 22...c6 with counterplay.

**22 ... exf4**

White had only reckoned on 22...c6? 23 fxe5! cxd5 24 exf6.

**23 ♕d2**

White evidently overlooked that on 23 ♕xe8 Black has an intermediate check on b6. On 23 ♗xf6 there could follow 23...fxe3 24 ♖xh6+ ♗h7 with the better game for Black.

**23 ... ♕b6+!**

The bishop must be lured away from the defence of the e1-square, thus creating the threat of a check on this square by Black's rook.

**24 ♗d4 ♕g6**

**25 ♕xf4**

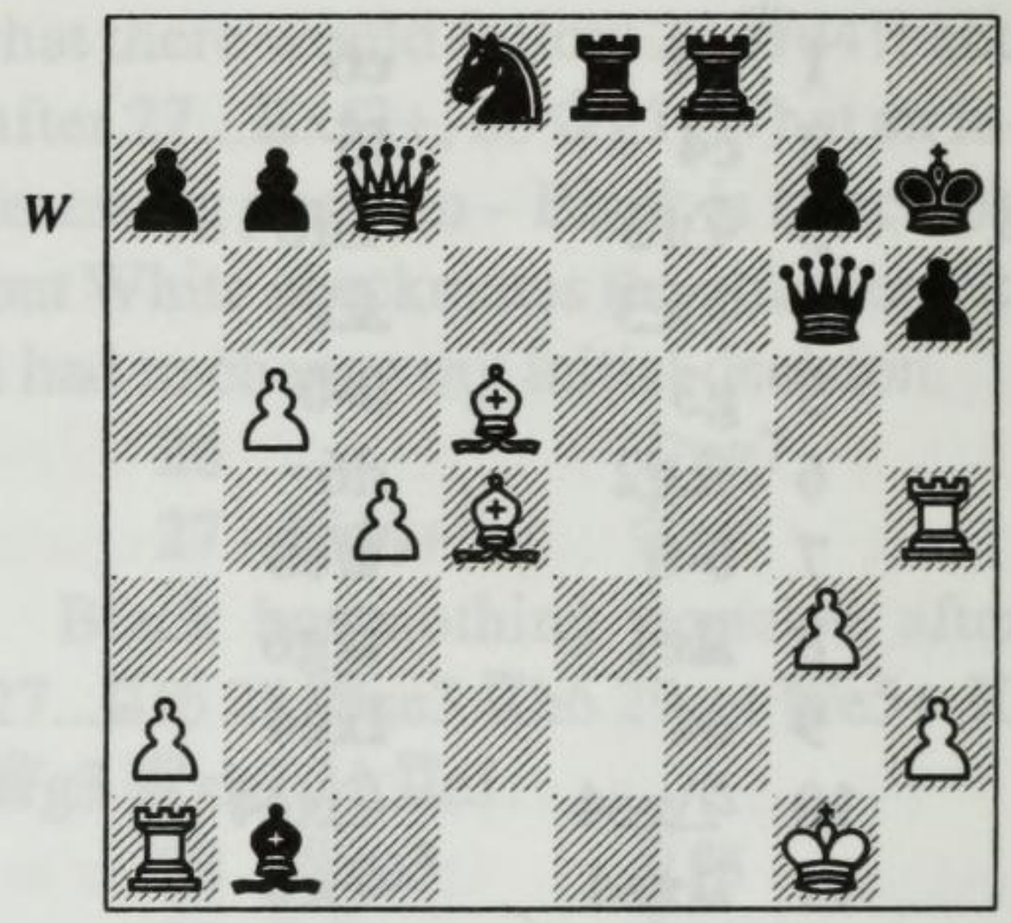
On 25 ♖xf4 there would have followed 25...♘e6.

**25 ... ♔h7**

**26 ♕xc7**

26 ♖f1 could be met by 26...♗h3!.

**26 ... ♗b1!** *(D)*



This move shuts the white rook out of the game. The rest is simple.

**27 ♗e5 ♘e6!**

**28 ♕d6 ♕f5**

**29 ♗f4 ♘g5**

Black could also have continued 29...g5 but as he was in time-trouble, he wanted to avoid weakening his king's position.

**30 ♕b4 ♗e4**

**31 ♗xe4 ♖xe4**

**32 ♖f1 ♖e2**
**33 ♕d6 ♖xa2!**

Of course, Black does not fall into the 'transparent' trap: 33...♘h3+? 34 ♖xh3 ♕xh3 35 ♕d3+.

**34 ♕d5 ♕c2**
**35 c5 ♖d8!**

Avoiding the last 'reef': on 35...♖e8? Black could have lost after 36 ♖xh6+!

**36 ♗d6 ♖e8**
**0-1**

Now there is no defence against the threat of 37...♖e1. In this position White overstepped the time limit.

## Game 12
## Tal – Klaman
*USSR Championship, Moscow 1957*
Sicilian Defence

**1 e4 c5**
**2 ♘f3 ♘c6**
**3 d4 cxd4**
**4 ♘xd4 ♘f6**
**5 ♘c3 d6**
**6 ♗g5 ♗d7**
**7 ♕d2**

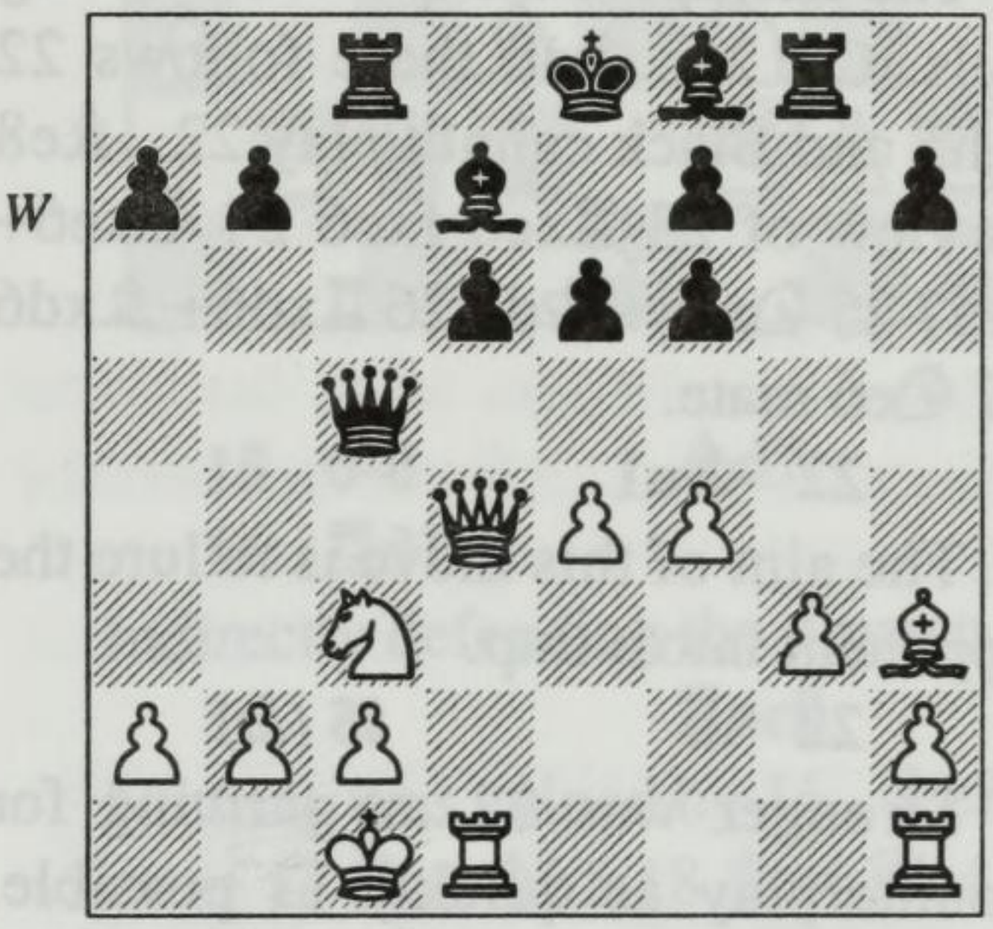
This leads to the loss of a tempo, but White deliberately agrees to this, since he supposes that after the exchange of knights on d4 it will be easy for him to develop an attack in the centre and on the kingside.

Also possible were the simple 7 ♗xf6 or 7 ♗e2.

**7 ... ♘xd4**
**8 ♕xd4 ♕a5**
**9 ♗xf6 gxf6**
**10 0-0-0 ♖c8**
**11 f4 ♖g8**
**12 g3 e6**
**13 ♗h3**

13 ♕xf6 would open the diagonal for the opponent's bishop.

**13 ... ♕c5** *(D)*




It is time to 'smoke out' White's queen from its active post in the centre. Already threatened was 14 ♖he1 followed by ♘d5.

**14 ♕d2 b5**

Black purposefully carries out his plan of counter-attacking on the queenside.

**15 ♖he1 b4**
**16 ♘e2 ♕c4**
**17 ♔b1 ♕xe4?**

He shouldn't have captured this pawn. Now the e-file is opened and Black is soon forced to return his material winnings.

**18 ♘d4 ♕b7**
**19 ♕d3 ♗e7**

In view of the threat of 20 ♘f5 Black is already forced to return the pawn.

**20 ♕xh7 ♖f8**
**21 ♗g4!**

Not only clearing the way for the h-pawn, but also keeping Black's king in the centre.

**21 ... ♕c7**

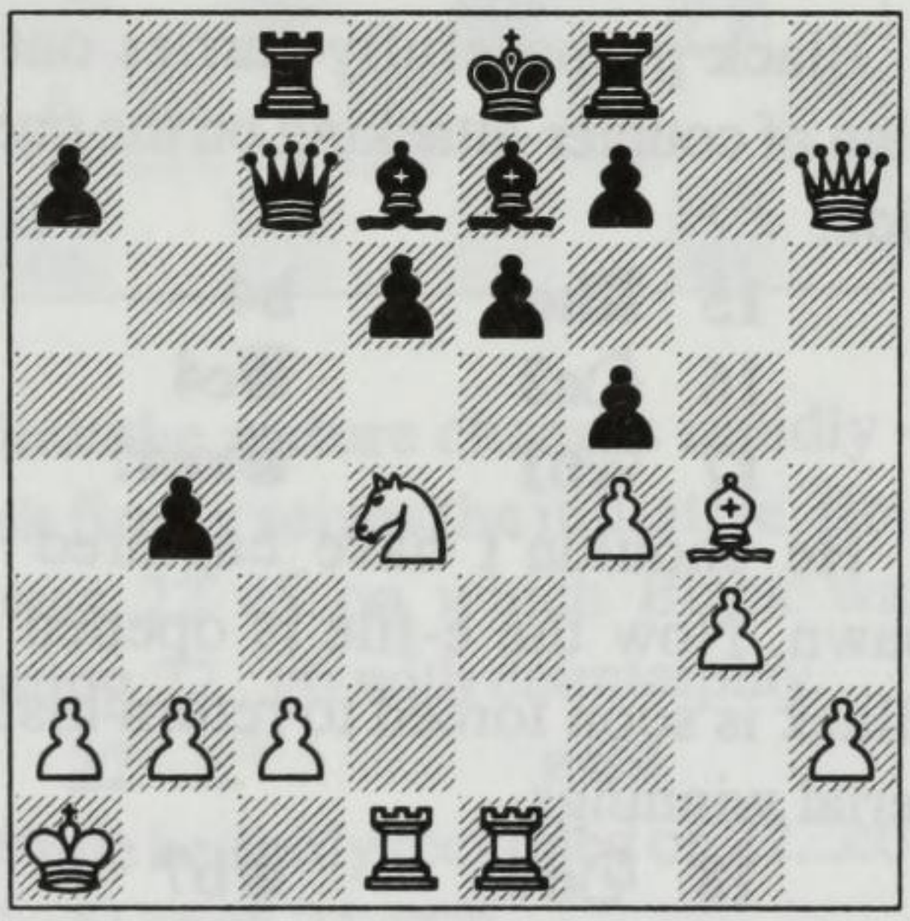
The attempt to escape with the king fails. On 21...♔d8 there follows 22 ♗h5 and Black cannot play 22...♗e8 in view of 23 ♖xe6 fxe6 24 ♘xe6+ ♔d7 25 ♘xf8+ ♔d8 26 ♖xd6+ ♗xd6 27 ♘e6 mate.

**22 ♔a1**

The aim of this move is to lure the opponent into a trap.

**22 ... f5** *(D)*

Stronger was 22...a5 striving for counterplay as quickly as possible. Then White gets nowhere by 23 ♗h5 e5 24 ♘f5 ♕xc2 25 ♗g6 because of 25...♕c5. In this case it would have been very difficult for White to break through Black's position in the centre.



**23 ♗xf5! exf5**
**24 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7**
**25 ♖e1+ ♔d8**

With the white king still on b1, Black would have been able to reply 25...♗e6 when 26 ♘xe6 would fail to 26...♕xc2+.

**26 ♕h4+ f6**
**27 ♕h6 ♕a5**

Both players had aimed for this position. Black was evidently counting on 28 ♕xf8+ ♔c7, when 29 ♕xf6 loses to 29...b3!; on 29 ♕e7 ♖e8 30 ♘e6+ ♔c8 31 ♕xd6 there also follows 31...b3!, while after 29 ♘b3 Black can go into an ending by first capturing the a-pawn. The following intermediate move, however, sharply changes the whole picture; White remains two pawns to the good.

**28 ♘b3 ♕d5**
**29 ♕xf8+ ♔c7**
**30 ♕xf6 ♖e8**
**31 ♖c1 ♗a4**
**32 ♕d4 ♕b7**
**33 ♖d1 ♖e6**

Or 33...♖d8 34 ♘c5.

**34 ♕c4+ 1-0**

## Game 13
## **Keres – Tal**
*USSR Championship, Moscow 1957*
Queen's Gambit Declined

**1 d4 ♘f6**
**2 c4 e6**
**3 ♘f3 c5**
**4 e3**

White avoids the sharp variations resulting from 4 d5 and takes play into a quiet line of the Queen's Gambit.

**4 ... d5**

**5 a3 cxd4**

Avoiding the positions arising after 6 dxc5 and b4.

**6 exd4 ♗e7**

Black does not wish to determine the position of his queen's knight. Thus, for instance, on 6...♘c6 White could play 7 c5 followed by ♗b5, seizing control over the centre.

**7 ♘c3**

On 7 c5 Black would be able to play 7...♘e4 followed by ...f5.

**7 ... 0-0**

**8 ♗f4**

Usually 8 ♗d3 is played, but after 8...dxc4 this leads to the loss of a tempo. With the move in the game, White hopes to avoid this, assuming that his opponent will sooner or later be forced to capture on c4.

**8 ... ♘c6**

**9 ♖c1 ♘e4!**

**10 ♗d3 ♘xc3**

**11 ♖xc3 dxc4**

**12 ♖xc4**

On 12 ♗xc4, 12...♗f6 would be possible.

**12 ... ♕a5+**

**13 ♗d2**

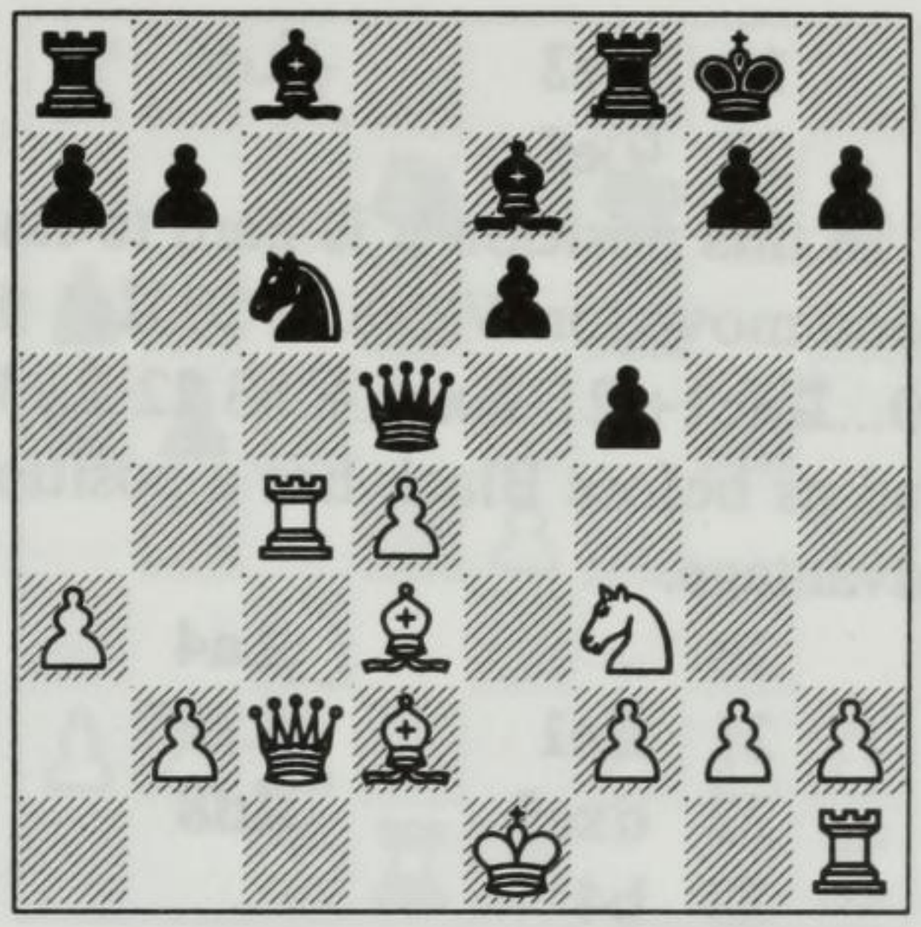
In the case of 13 ♕d2 Black would have exchanged queens, transposing into a level ending.

**13 ... ♕d5**

**14 ♕c2**

The main cause of White's subsequent difficulties. Stronger was 14 ♕e2 which does not block the rook's retreat.

**14 ... f5** *(D)*




**15 0-0 ♗d7**

**16 ♖d1**

Indirectly defending the d-pawn.

**16 ... ♖ac8**

Nothing was gained by 16...♗e8 in view of 17 ♖c3 ♗h5 18 ♗c4 ♕e4 19 ♕b3 with the better game for White. The following line also fails: 16...♖f6 17 ♖c3 ♖g6 18 ♗c4 ♕xf3? 19 ♖xc3 ♘xd4 20 ♕d3 ♘xf3+ 21 ♕xf3 ♗c6 22 ♕xf5 etc.

16...b5 would only weaken Black's position, since after 17 ♖c3 ♘xd4 18 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 19 ♗e3 White seizes the initiative.

**17 ♗e3 ♘a5**

17...g5 would have failed to 18 ♖c5 ♕d6 (accepting the exchange sacrifice by 18...♗xc5 is risky) 19 d5 ♘e5 20 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 21 dxe6! and the resulting complications are in White's favour.

**18 ♖xc8**

If 18 ♖c3, then after 18...♖xc3 19 bxc3 ♗b5 Black sets up a blockade on the light squares.

**18 ... ♖xc8**

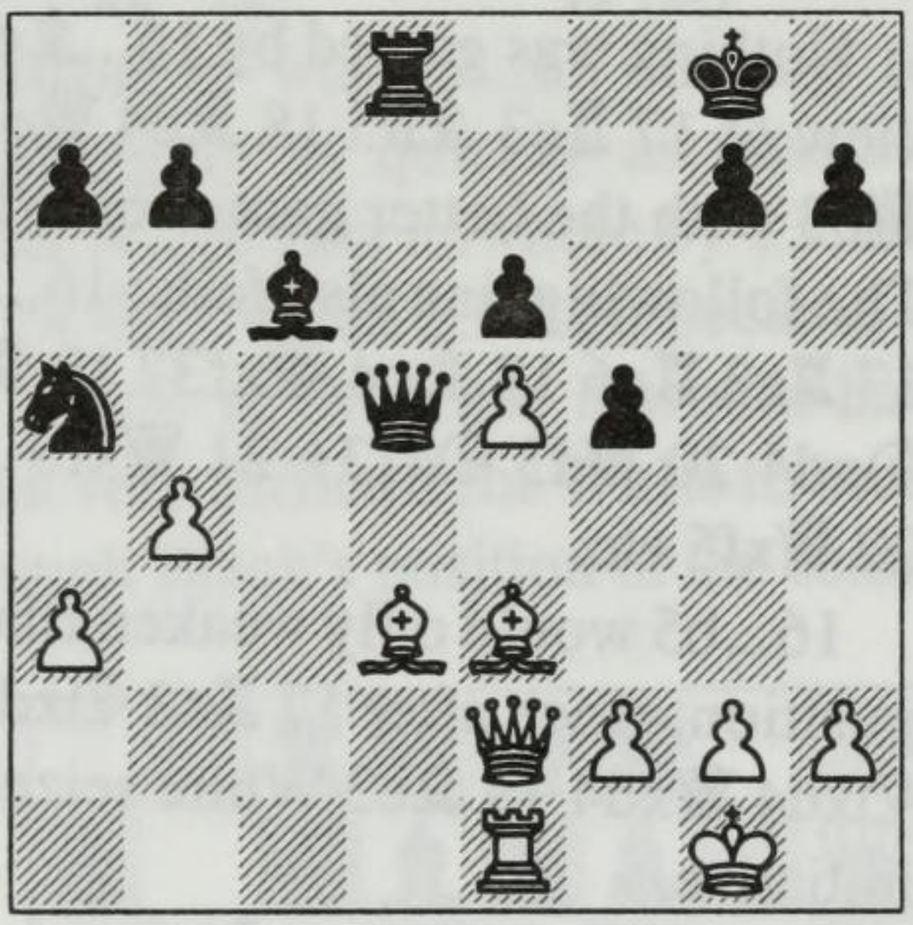
**19 ♕e2 ♗d6**
**20 ♘e5**

In this position it is hard to find a good move for White. If 20 ♖c1 then 20...♖xc1+ 21 ♗xc1 ♘b3 22 ♗e3 b5 and as before Black has a positional advantage.

**20 ... ♗a4**
**21 ♖e1 ♗xe5**
**22 dxe5 ♖d8**
**23 b4**

Black would also keep the better game after 23 ♗c2 ♗xc2 followed by ...♘c6. If 23 ♗b1, then 23...♗d1 etc.

**23 ... ♗c6!** *(D)*



Very likely White underestimated the strength of this intermediate move.

**24 f3 ♕xd3**
**25 ♕xd3**

White could have put up a more stubborn resistance by 25 bxa5 ♕xa3 26 a6!

**25 ... ♖xd3**
**26 bxa5 ♖xa3**
**27 ♗xa7 ♖xa5**
**28 ♗d4 ♖a2**
**29 ♖b1 ♖d2**
**30 ♗c3 ♖c2**
**31 ♗d4 ♔f7**
**32 h4**

This move simplifies Black's task to a considerable degree. 32 h3 was better.

**32 ... ♔g6**
**33 ♖b4 h6**
**34 ♖b2**

This loses quickly, but against the threats of ...f4 and ...♔h5 White had no defence.

**34 ... ♖xb2**
**35 ♗xb2 ♔h5**
**36 ♗a3 ♔xh4**
**37 ♗f8 ♔g3**
**38 ♗xg7 h5**
**39 ♗h6 ♗xf3!**
**40 gxf3 ♔xf3**
**41 ♔f1 b5**
**42 ♗d2 h4**
**43 ♗b4 h3**
**44 ♔g1 ♔e2**

**0-1**

Game 14

## Tal – Kolarov

*Student Olympiad, Reykjavik 1957*

Sicilian Defence

**1 e4 c5**
**2 ♘f3 d6**
**3 d4 cxd4**
**4 ♘xd4 ♘f6**
**5 ♘c3 a6**
**6 ♗g5 ♘bd7**

At present 6...e6 is considered to be stronger, although after 7 f4 followed

by ♕f3 and 0-0-0 Black does not appear to have equality. The move in the game was successfully adopted by Petrosian against Nezhmetdinov in the 21st USSR Championship, where there occurred 7 ♕f3? h6! 8 ♗e3 e5! with an excellent game for Black. Later, however, it was established that after 7 ♗c4 White has the advantage. In the present game Black adopts a new continuation.

**7 ♗c4 ♕a5**
**8 ♕d2 e6**

Black's last move was made with the aim of gaining a tempo in the event of the traditional sacrifice on e6.

**9 0-0-0 b5**
**10 ♗xe6!?**

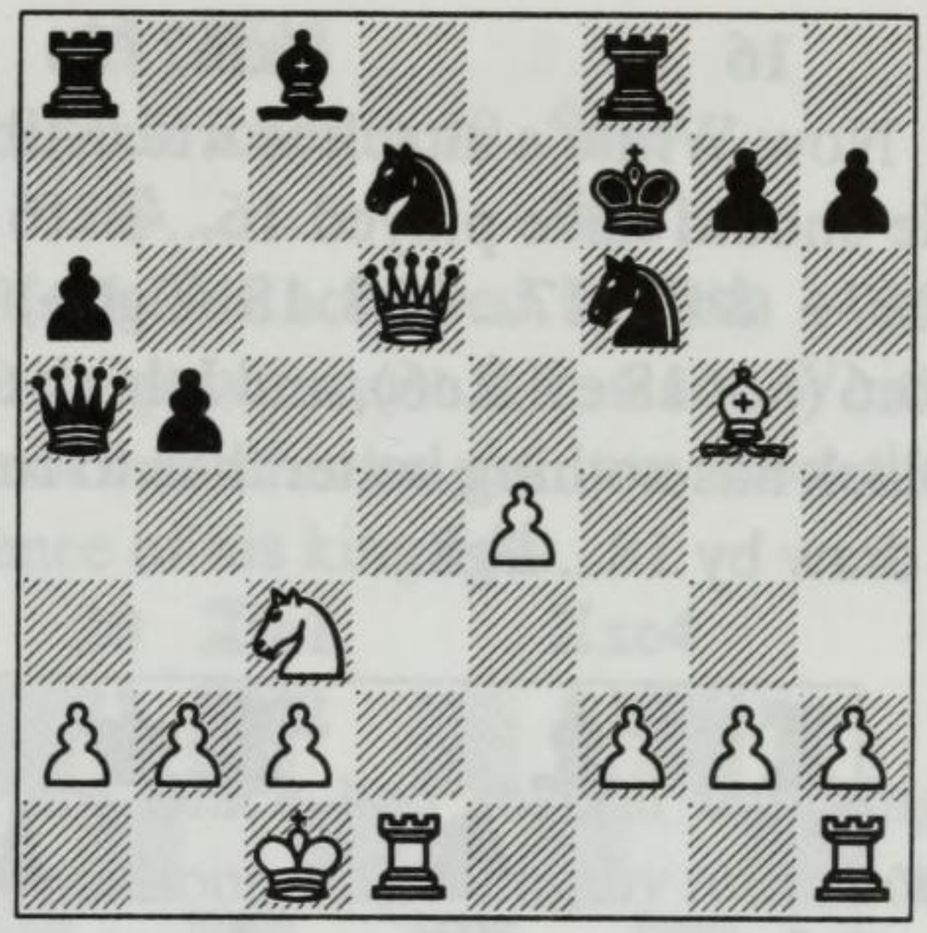
In the given position this sacrifice is incorrect, and gives White at best a draw. But White's system has in no way been refuted. In order to demonstrate the strength of his position, White should have continued 10 ♗d5! exd5 11 ♘c6! ♕c7 12 exd5, with a very strong, perhaps irresistible attack. I wanted to force matters, and so I avoided the variation 10 ♗d5 ♘xd5 11 exd5 e5 12 ♕e1 ♕c7 when Black has a fairly solid position, although White has an undisputed advantage.

**10 ... fxe6**
**11 ♘xe6 ♔f7**

Evidently the only move. Black hastens to move his king away.

**12 ♘xf8 ♖xf8**
**13 ♕xd6** *(D)*

This is the position which White had in mind when he sacrificed the




piece. The threats of 14 e5 and 14 ♘d5 appear dangerous, but there followed ...

**13 ... b4**
**14 ♘d5 ♕xa2!**

... and it turns out that White has nothing concrete, since the following variation fails: 15 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 16 ♕e7+ ♔g8 17 ♘xf6+ gxf6 18 ♖d3 ♕f7! In other variations also, Black's queen plays an active part in the defence of his kingside. After thinking for about an hour, White played ...

**15 ♖he1**

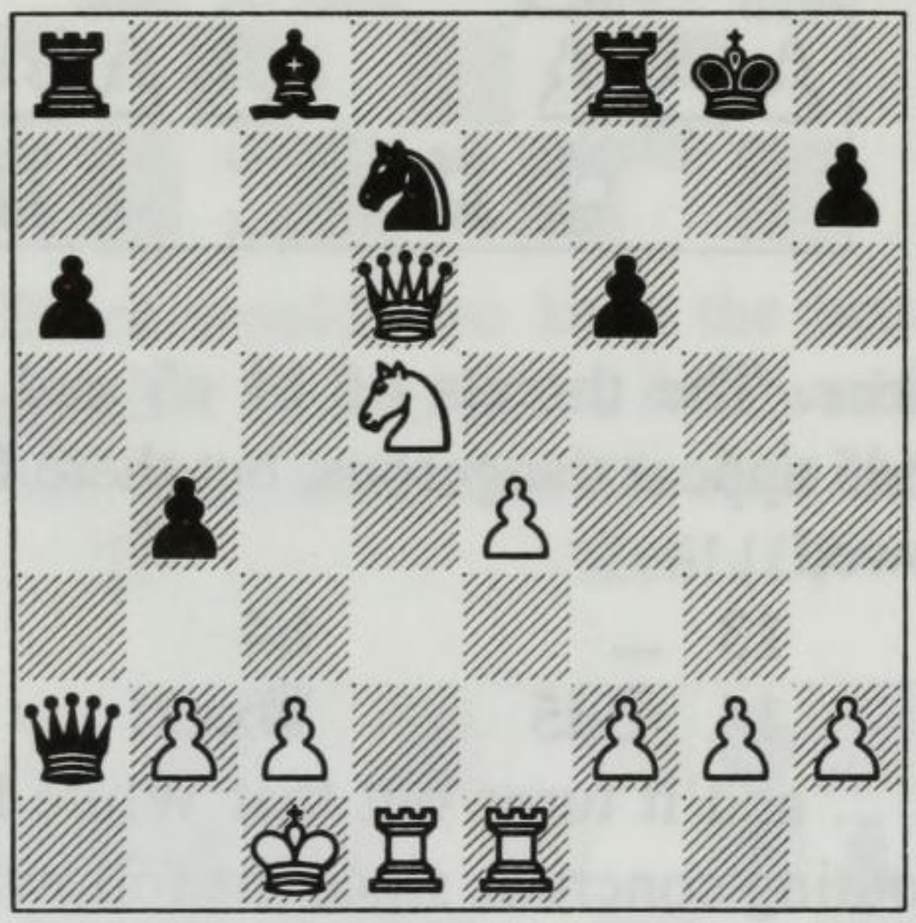
... after which Black could have forced a draw by 15...♕a1+ 16 ♔d2 ♕xb2 17 e5 ♕d4+ with perpetual check. Thinking that White had no compensation, Kolarov calmly continued ...

**15 ... ♔g8**
**16 ♗xf6!**

This move shows that White's attack is not yet over. The move proved to be a big surprise to Kolarov, who straight away committed what was apparently the decisive mistake.

**16 ... gxf6?** *(D)*

Now White's attack is irresistible. He should have played 16...♘xf6 17 ♘e7+ ♔f7 (17...♔h8 18 ♘g6+) 18 ♘c6 (not 18 e5 ♗e6), and I think that Black has nothing better than to force a draw by 18...♔g8.




**17 ♖d3**

Threatening ♖g3+ and ♕e7.

**17 ... ♕a1+**
**18 ♔d2 ♕xb2**
**19 f4**

Nothing was gained by 19 ♖g3+ ♔h8 20 ♕e7 f5. The move in the game takes away the square e5 from Black's queen, and renews the threat.

**19 ... b3**

19...♔h8 would have been answered by the same move as in the game.

**20 ♘e7+ ♔h8**
**21 ♖xb3 ♕a2**
**22 ♕d5 ♖a7?**

This loses straight away. 22...♖d8 was the only move, against which White was planning 23 ♘g6+ ♔g7 24 ♘e5! ♘xe5 25 ♕xd8 ♘c4+ 26 ♔c3 ♕a5+ 27 ♕xa5 ♘xa5 28 ♖b6 ♗d7 29 ♔b4 ♘c6+ 30 ♔c5 ♖c8 31 ♔d6 ♗e8 32 ♖b7+ ♔g8 33 e5.

**23 ♘g6+ ♔g7**
**24 ♘xf8 ♔xf8**
**25 e5! ♘xe5**
**26 ♕c5+ ♔g8**
**27 ♕xc8+ ♔f7**
**28 fxe5 1-0**

## Game 15

## Ferrantes – Tal

*Milan-Riga Match, 1957*

King's Indian Defence

**1 d4 ♘f6**
**2 ♘f3 g6**
**3 c4 ♗g7**
**4 ♘c3 0-0**
**5 e4 d6**
**6 h3 e5**
**7 dxe5**

The usual continuation 7 d5 ♘h5 8 g3 f5 is much more interesting.

**7 ... dxe5**
**8 ♗e3 ♕e7**

Black immediately moves his queen away. Also possible was 8...♘bd7 but I wanted to begin the battle for the d4-square.

**9 ♕b3 ♘c6**
**10 ♘d5 ♕d8**

Weaker was 10...♘xd5 11 cxd5 ♘d4 12 ♗xd4 exd4 13 ♗d3.

**11 ♗d3?**

Now Black seizes the initiative. On 11 ♖d1 I very much wanted to sacrifice my queen by 11...♘xe4 12 ♘b6 axb6 13 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 which would

have led to favourable complications. White should have continued 11 ♗g5. Then the following line does not work: 11...♘d4 12 ♘xd4 exd4 13 ♕f3. I was going to play 11...♗e6 and then exchange on d5.

**11 ... ♘d4**
**12 ♗xd4**

White could not play 12 ♘xd4 exd4 13 ♗xd4 ♘xd5 14 ♗xg7 ♘f4 15 ♗xf8 ♘xd3+ 16 ♔f1 ♕d4 17 ♕c2 ♔xf8 18 ♖d1 because of 18...♗e6.

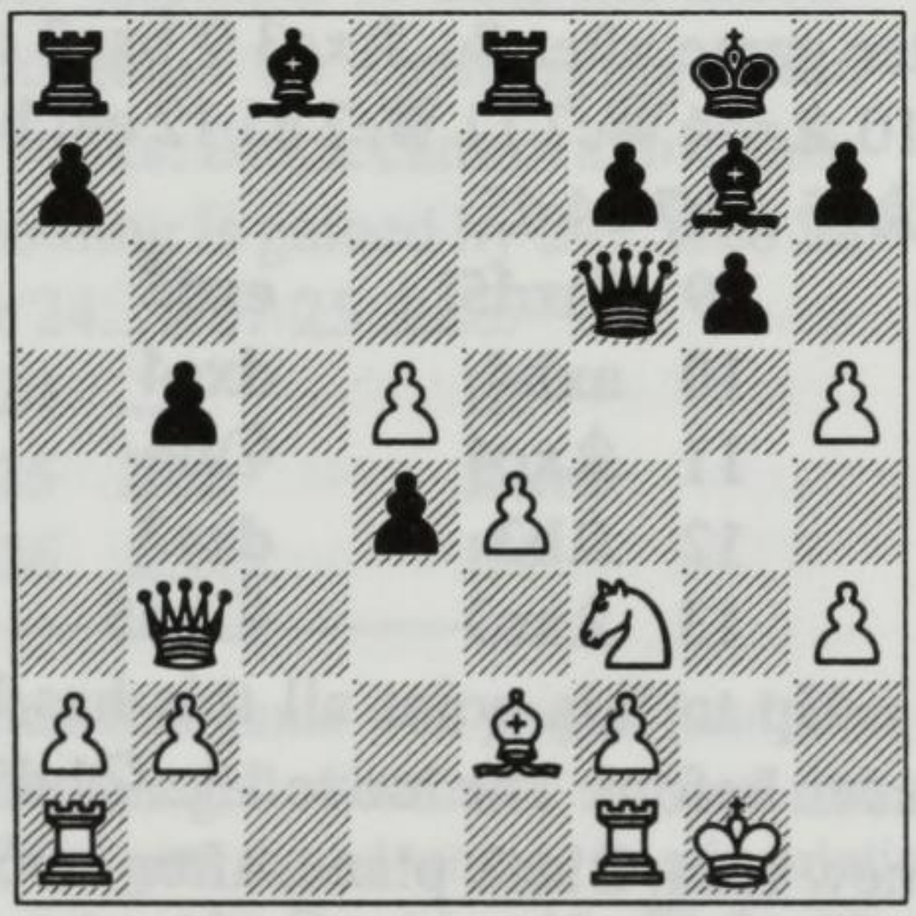
**12 ... exd4**
**13 0-0 ♘h5**

Black plans, after 14...c6, to move his knight to f4 and begin an attack. Therefore White's reply is forced.

**14 g4 c6**
**15 gxh5 cxd5**
**16 cxd5 ♕f6!**

It was not worth wasting time on the capture of the h3-pawn, since after 16...♗xh3 17 ♖fe1 White succeeds, by playing ♗f1 and ♘h2, in consolidating his position.

**17 ♗c4 b5**
**18 ♗e2 ♖e8** *(D)*



**19 ♕d3**

19 ♘d2 loses to 19...♕g5+.

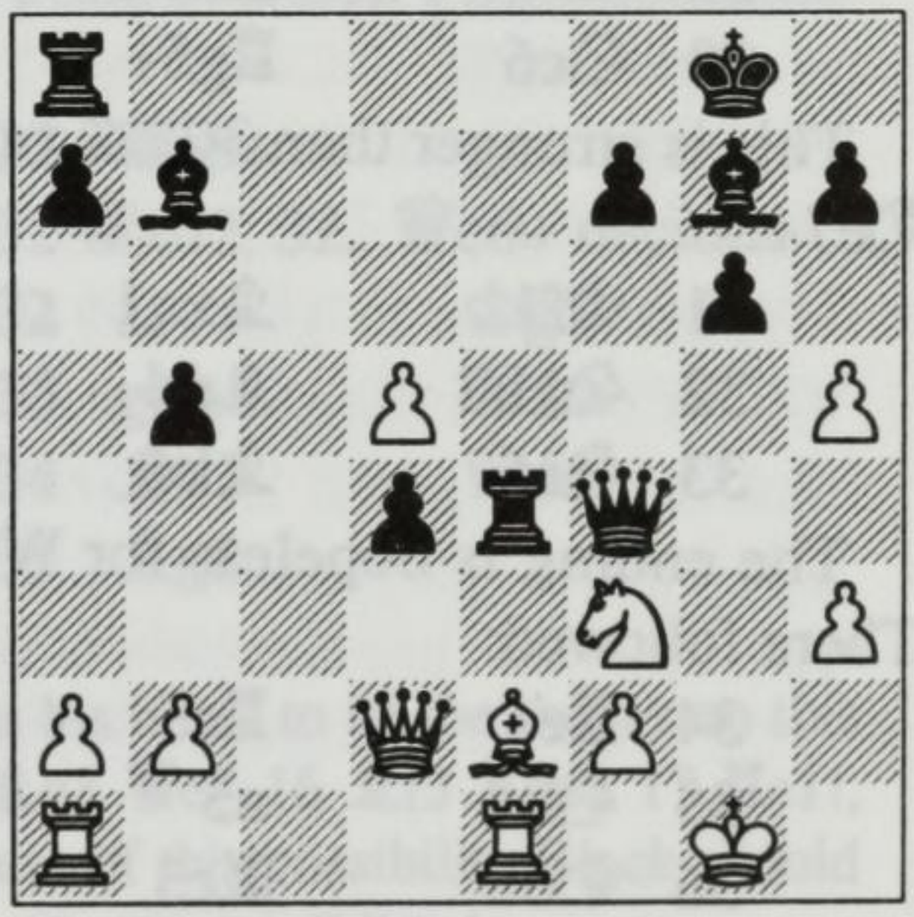
**19 ... ♕f4**

Black has achieved his aim – the white e-pawn must fall, since White cannot move his knight away from the defence of his kingside.

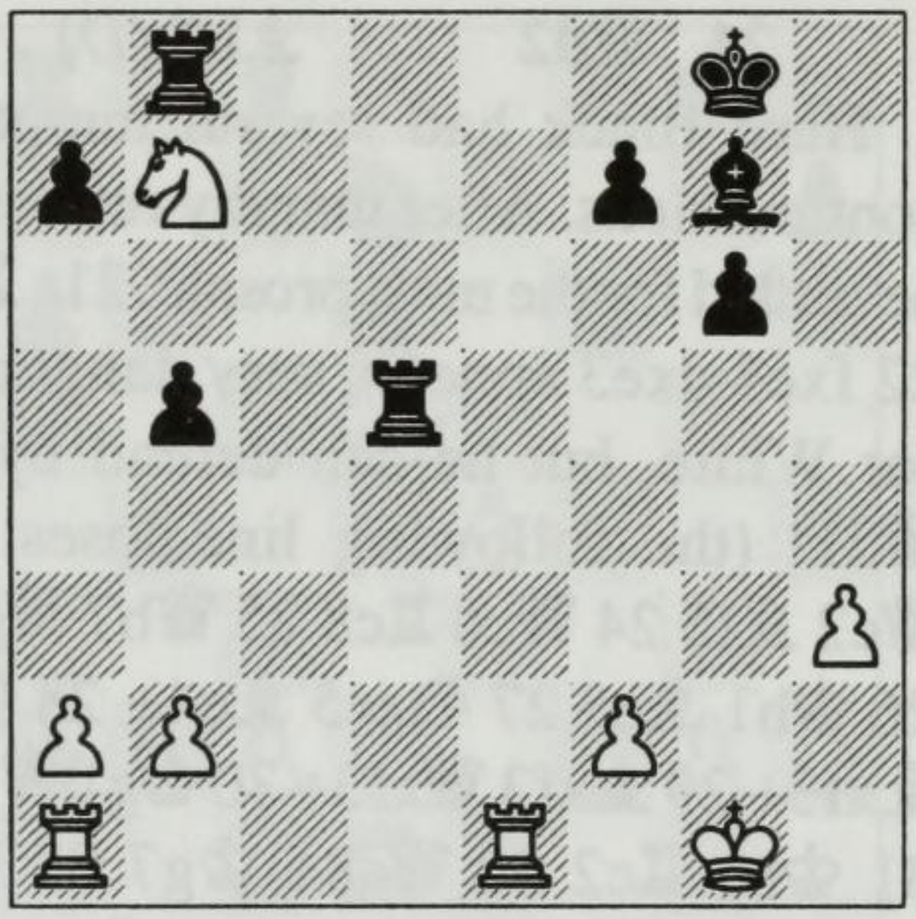
**20 ♖fe1 ♖xe4**
**21 ♕d2 ♗b7** *(D)*

Here Black had several tempting continuations. After lengthy reflection he settled for the most prosaic. 21...♖e3 22 fxe3 dxe3 appears very dangerous for White, but he can defend by 23 ♕d1! (the following line loses: 23 ♕c2 ♗f5 24 ♕c6 ♖c8 25 ♕b7 ♕g3+ 26 ♔h1 ♗e5 27 ♘xe5 ♗e4+ 28 ♘f3 ♗xf3+ 29 ♗xf3 ♕xf3+ 30 ♔g1 ♕g3+ 31 ♔h1 ♖c2 32 ♕a8+ ♔g7 33 h6+ ♔xh6 34 ♕f8+ ♔h5) 23...♕g3+ 24 ♔h1 ♗f5 25 ♗f1!

In the case of 21...♕f6, a possible variation is 22 h6 ♗xh3 23 hxg7 ♖ae8 24 d6 d3 25 d7 (25 ♕xd3 ♖g4+ 26 ♔h2 ♕f4+ 27 ♔xh3 ♖e5) 25...♗xd7 26 ♕xd3 and Black does not appear to have anything decisive.



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **22** | **♕xf4** | **♖xf4** |
| **23** | **hxg6** | **hxg6** |
| **24** | **♘d2** | **d3** |
| **25** | **♗xd3** | **♖d4** |
| **26** | **♘b3!** | **♖xd3** |
| **27** | **♘c5** | **♖xd5** |
| **28** | **♘xb7** | **♖b8** *(D)* |




**29 ♘a5**

White could have put up a more lengthy resistance by playing 29 ♖e7 ♗f6 30 ♖c7 ♗e5 31 ♖c5 ♖xc5 32 ♘xc5 ♗xb2 33 ♖b1 ♗d4, although Black should be able to win with his extra pawn.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **29** | **...** | **♗xb2** |
| **30** | **♘c6** | **♖g5+** |

This is stronger than 30...♗xa1 31 ♘e7+.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **31** | **♔f1** | **♗xa1** |
| **32** | **♘xb8** | **♗d4** |
| **33** | **♘c6** | **♗b6** |

The ending is hopeless for White. There followed:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **34** | **♖e4** | **♖c5** |
| **35** | **♘b4** | **a5** |
| **36** | **♘d3** | **♖c3** |
| **37** | **♘f4** | **♖f3** |
| **38** | **♖e8+** | **♔g7** |
| **39** | **♘d5** | **♖xf2+** |
| **40** | **♔e1** | **♗c5** |
| **41** | **♘c7** | **♖xa2** |
| **42** | **♘xb5** | **♖h2** |

**0-1**

## Game 16
## Tal – Tolush
*USSR Championship Riga 1958*
Nimzo-Indian Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **d4** | **♘f6** |
| **2** | **c4** | **e6** |
| **3** | **♘c3** | **♗b4** |
| **4** | **e3** | **c5** |
| **5** | **♘f3** | **d5** |
| **6** | **♗d3** | **0-0** |
| **7** | **0-0** | **♘bd7** |

More accurate is 7...dxc4 8 ♗xc4 ♘bd7. Now Black gets into serious difficulties.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **8** | **a3** | **cxd4** |

White also holds the initiative after 8...dxc4 9 axb4! cxd4 10 ♗xh7+ ♘xh7 11 ♕xd4 (Koblents-Barshauskas, Tallinn 1956). White has the better game after 8...♗xc3 9 bxc3 dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♕c7 11 ♕e2 e5 12 e4! b6 13 ♗g5 ♗b7 14 d5.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **9** | **♘xd5!** | **exd5** |
| **10** | **axb4** | **dxc4** |
| **11** | **♗xc4** | **♘b6** |
| **12** | **♗b3** | **dxe3** |
| **13** | **♗xe3** | **♘bd5** |

Up to this point all this has been seen before. The move 13...♘bd5 is a new idea. Black plans, after ...b6 and

the queenside. In the coming struggle the two sides would have roughly equal chances[1].

**15 ... ♘f6!**

Now Black wins back his piece.

**16 ♗f3**

Even worse is 16 ♗xc5 ♘xe4 17 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 when White can play neither 18 ♕d1 because of 18...♕g5 nor 18 ♕c1 in view of 18...♖c8.

**16 ... ♘xe4**
**17 ♘xe4 ♗xe4**
**18 ♗xe4 ♕xd6**
**19 ♕c2 ♖e7**

The technical stage of the game begins. With the opposite-coloured bishops it is very difficult to realise the extra pawn on the queenside, and therefore Black decides to build up an attack on the white king, using the open e-file and the possibility of his bishop occupying an active post at d4.

**20 ♗f3 ♖ae8**
**21 ♖ad1 ♗d4**
**22 a4 b6**
**23 b3 ♖e5**
**24 ♖d2**

White attempts to ease his defensive problems by exchanging off a pair of rooks. Black cannot avoid this, since nothing is gained by 24...♕e6 25 ♕c4 or 24...♕e7 25 ♗c6.

**24 ... h5**
**25 ♖e2 ♖xe2**
**26 ♗xe2 h4**

The storm clouds are gathering over White's king position.

**27 ♔h1 ♕f4**

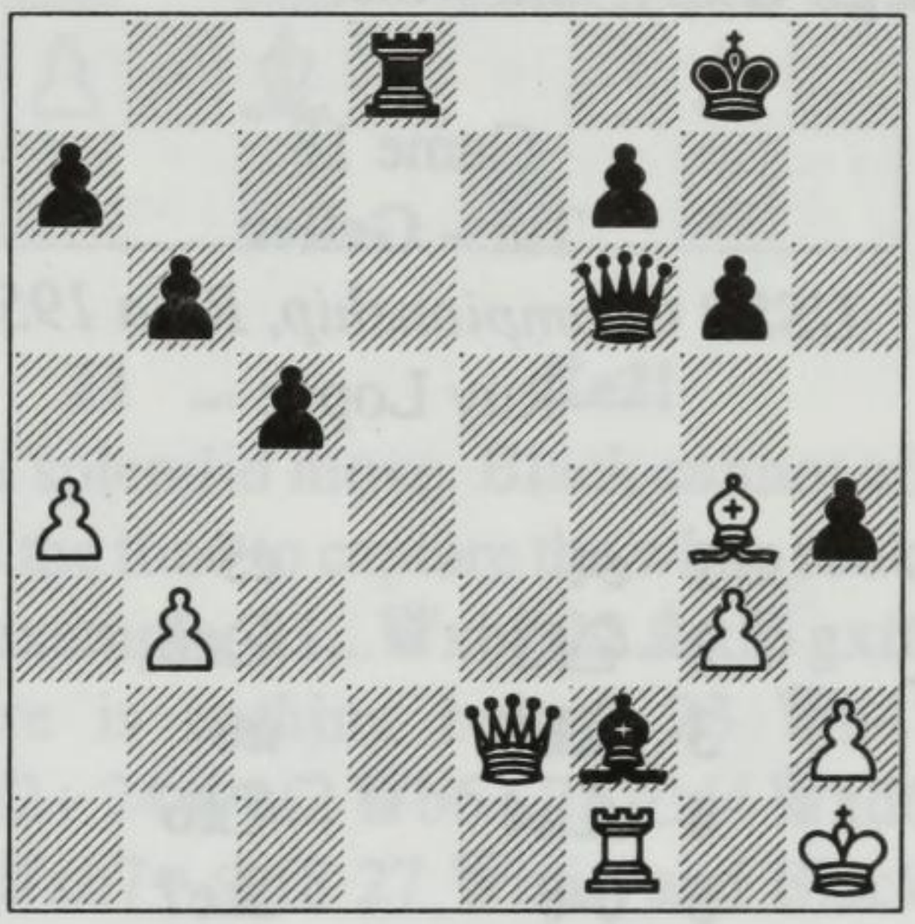
The threat is 28...♗e5. 28 ♗c4 does not prevent this, since after 28...♗e5 29 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 White's queen is *en prise* and he is threatened with mate.

**28 g3 ♕f6**
**29 ♕d1 ♖d8**

The rook has played its part on the e-file.

**30 ♗g4 ♗xf2!**
**31 ♕e2** *(D)*

*B*



**31 ... ♖d2!**

The point of Black's little combination.

**32 ♕e8+**

On 32 ♕xd2, 32...♕c6+ decides.

**32 ... ♔g7**
**33 gxh4 ♕d4**
**34 ♗h3 ♕d3**
**35 ♗g2**

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1 After this game was played (and after Tal wrote his notes to it) the theory on this line changed. Kholmov showed that after 15 ♗g3 ♕e7 16 ♗f3 ♖ad8 17 ♖e1!, White gets the advantage in all variations. Because of this possibility Black should not play 12...♘xe4 but 12...♕e7 with a satisfactory game. – *Editor's note.*

White could have attempted to complicate matters by 35 ♕e5+ ♔h7 36 ♕f4 after which Black cannot play 36...♕xh3 because of perpetual check: 37 ♕xf7+ ♔h6 38 ♕f8+ ♔h5 39 ♕h8+ ♔g4 40 ♕c8+. However, Black can win by 36...♕d5+ 37 ♗g2 ♕xg2+ 38 ♔xg2 ♗e3+ 39 ♔h1 ♗xf4 40 ♖xf4 ♔g7.

**35 ... ♖d1**

**0-1**

Since on 36 ♕b5 there would follow 36...♖xf1+ 37 ♗xf1 ♕e4+ 38 ♗g2 ♕xh4, and wins.

Game 18

**Tal – Geller**

*USSR Championship, Riga 1958*

Ruy Lopez

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **e5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **♘c6** |
| **3** | **♗b5** | **a6** |
| **4** | **♗a4** | **♘f6** |
| **5** | **0-0** | **♗e7** |
| **6** | **♖e1** | **b5** |
| **7** | **♗b3** | **0-0** |
| **8** | **c3** | **d6** |
| **9** | **h3** | **♘a5** |
| **10** | **♗c2** | **c5** |
| **11** | **d4** | **♗b7** |

This move, in place of the usual 11...♕c7, has recently become more and more popular. The Geller-Averbakh game, played a few rounds earlier, showed that the normal move 12 ♘bd2 is not dangerous for Black. Therefore, in the present game I wanted to try out a dubious idea involving an immediate flank blow. Since White also did not obtain an advantage in this game, one is forced to the conclusion that White must block the centre by the advance d5.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | **b4** | **cxb4** |
| **13** | **cxb4** | **♘c4** |
| **14** | **♘bd2** | **d5** |

Also possible was the preliminary 14...♘xd2. The move in the game leads to sharper play.

**15 exd5**

Naturally White was not satisfied by the continuation 15 ♘xc4 bxc4 16 dxe5 ♘xe4.

**15 ... exd4**

Stronger, perhaps, was 15...♘xd5 16 ♘xc4 bxc4 17 ♘xe5 though after 17...♘xb4 18 ♘xc4 ♘xc2 19 ♕xc2 ♖c8 20 ♕d3 White repulses Black's threats, and retains his extra pawn for the time being.

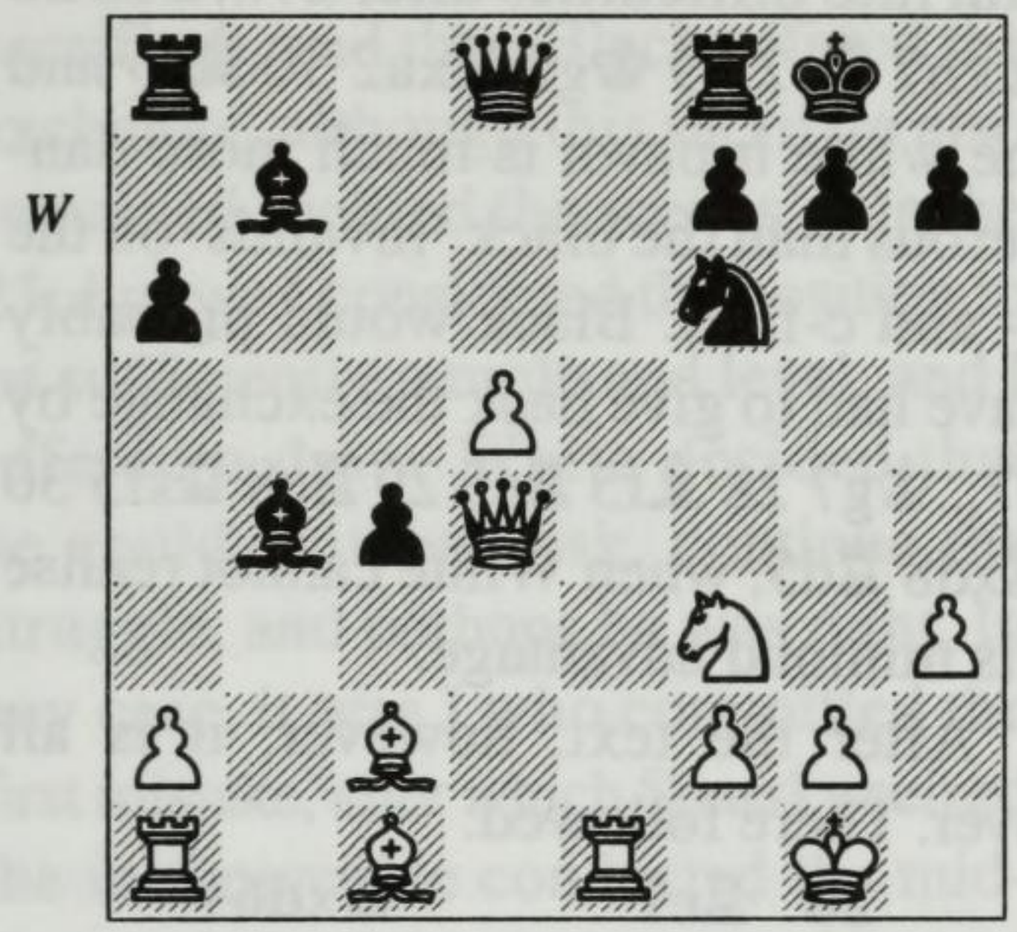
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **16** | **♘xc4** | **bxc4** |
| **17** | **♕xd4** | **♗xb4** *(D)* |

Here Black stood at the crossroads. Both white pawns are weak, but in one move only one of them can be captured. After lengthy reflection Geller decided to leave White with the less easily defended d-pawn. It is difficult to say whether this was the strongest move. In any case 17...♘xd5 gives White the advantage after 18 ♕e4 g6 19 ♗h6 ♖e8 20 ♗a4 ♘c3 21 ♕xb7 ♘xa4 22 ♕c6[1].

---

1 22 ♖ad1 wins a piece.

On 17...♗xd5 White can play 18 ♘e5, with threats against the black king.




**18 ♖b1!**

Thanks to this move White is able to keep his initiative alive, whereas moves by the other rook would let it die away.

**18 ... ♗xe1**

18...♘xd5 fails to 19 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 20 ♘g5+ ♔g8 21 ♕h4 ♘f6 22 ♖xb4 with the threats of ♖xb7 and ♗b2.

**19 ♖xb7 ♖e8**

Although objectively this may be the strongest move, the following continuation would have dampened White's aggressive intentions: 19...♕xd5 20 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 21 ♘xe1 ♖ab8 22 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 transposing into a complicated ending, which is perhaps not unfavourable for Black.

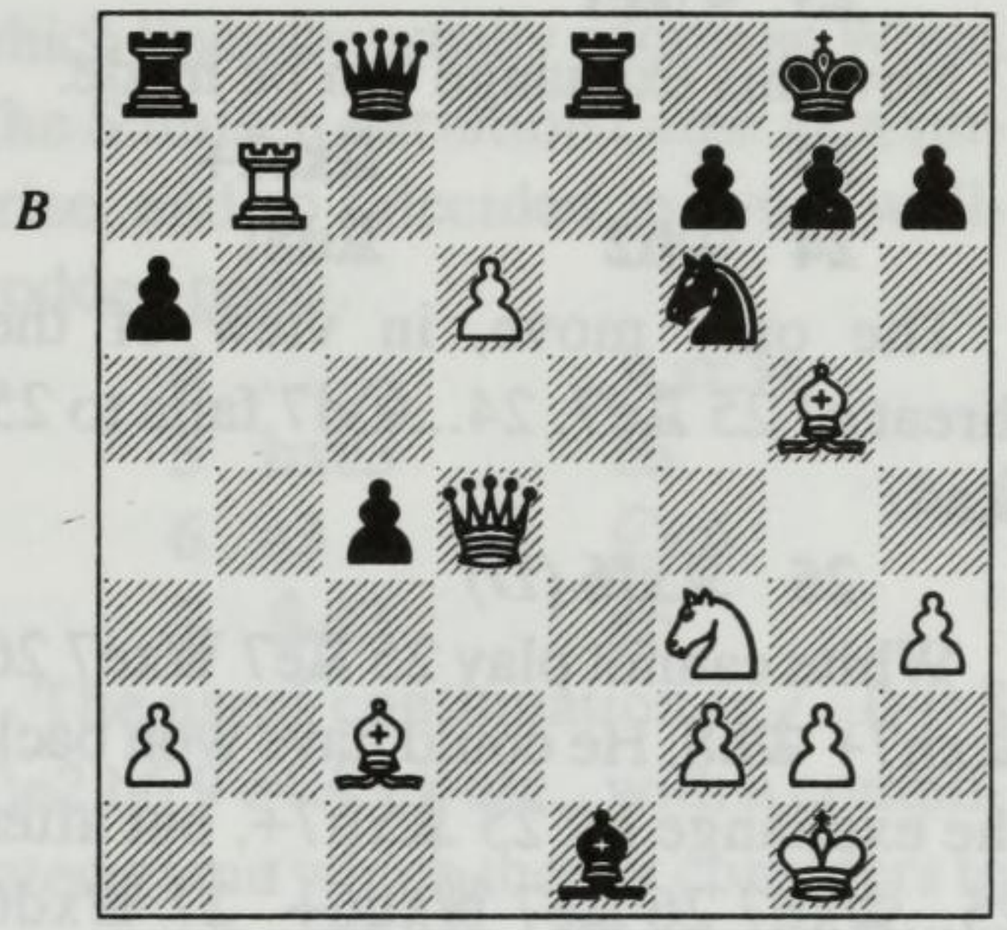
**20 d6**

Not fearing 20...♖e2 because of the reply 21 ♕xc4.

**20 ... ♕c8**

**21 ♗g5!?** *(D)*

Also possible was 21 ♖c7 ♕e6 22 ♗g5 ♘d5 23 ♖c5 ♘c3 with a completely unclear position.




**21 ... ♖e2!**

A splendid move. Black cannot afford the time to capture the white rook, for example: 21...♕xb7 22 ♗xf6 gxf6 (there is nothing better) 23 ♕h4[1] ♗xf2+ 24 ♔xf2 ♕b6+ 25 ♘d4 ♕xd6 26 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 27 ♕h6+ and Black has a 'pleasant' choice, either to lose his queen by ...♔e7, or to be mated after ...♔g8. If instead of 23...♗xf2+, Black plays 23...f5, then first the queen with check, and then the knight, have a 'clear road' into the hostile camp via g5. And if this is not enough, then at the appropriate moment the bishop will also have something to say. Now, however, White is forced to lower the voltage.

**22 ♖c7**

---

1 23 ♕g4+ wins at once, e.g. 23...♔f8 24 ♗xh7 or 23...♔h8 24 ♕f5.

After 22 ♘xe1 ♖xe1+ 23 ♔h2 ♕xb7 24 ♗xf6 gxf6 25 ♕h4 f5 26 ♗xf5 f6 White's attack, without the support of the cavalry, would soon come to a halt.

**22 ... ♕e6**

**23 ♘xe1**

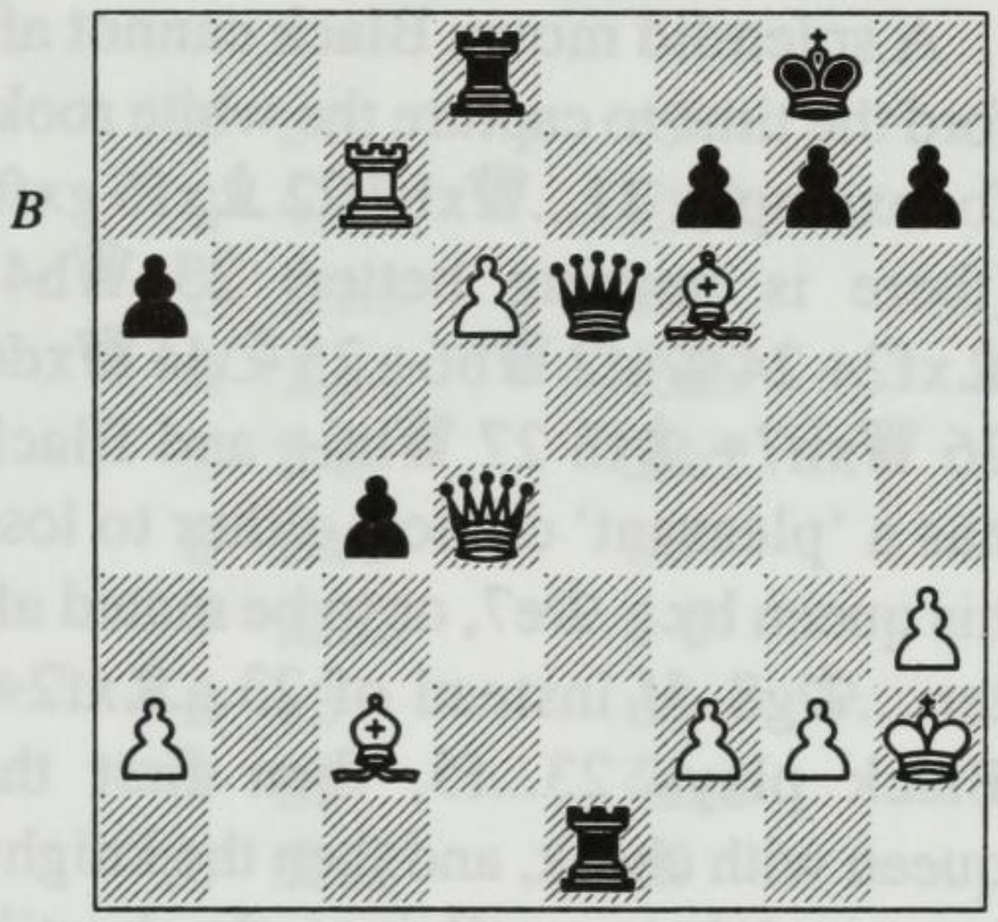
Now this exchange can be made.

**23 ... ♖xe1+**

**24 ♔h2 ♖d8!**

The only move, in view of the threat of 25 ♖e7. 24...♘d7 fails to 25 ♗a4.

**25 ♗xf6** *(D)*


B

White cannot play 25 ♖e7 ♕xe7 26 ♗xh7+ ♔h8. He could have won back the exchange by 25 ♗xh7+, but after 25...♔xh7 26 ♖e7 ♕xd6+[1] 27 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 28 ♖xe1 Black stands better.

**25 ... gxf6??**

An unexpected blunder, which distorts the logical course of the game. Necessary was 25...♕xf6 and after 26 ♕xf6 gxf6 27 d7 an interesting ending results. Attempts by Black to approach the d-pawn with his king could lead him into difficulties after 27...♔f8 28 ♗xh7 ♖e2 29 ♔g3 ♖xa2 30 ♗f5 and the white h-pawn is much more dangerous than the black 'invalids' on the a- and c-files. Black would probably have had to give back the exchange by 27...♔g7 28 ♗f5 ♖e5 29 ♖c8 ♖xf5 30 ♖xd8 ♖d5, when White cannot realise his minimal advantage.

After the text, however, it is all over. There followed:

**26 ♖e7 ♕xd6+**

If 26...♕xe7, then 27 ♕g4+ wins the queen.

**27 ♕xd6 ♖xd6**

**28 ♖xe1 ♖d2**

**29 ♖c1 ♖xf2**

**30 ♗e4 ♖xa2**

**31 ♖xc4 a5**

**32 ♖c8+ ♔g7**

**33 ♖c7 1-0**

## Game 19
## **Spassky – Tal**
*USSR Championship, Riga 1958*
Nimzo-Indian Defence

The reader is no doubt well aware of the significance of this encounter, which took place in the last round[2].

In order to reach his respective goal, each player needed to win; this

---

1 26...♖e4!, and only then taking on d6, wins for Black at once.

2 Victory would give Tal clear first place; Spassky needed to win in order to make certain of qualifying for the Portorož Interzonal – *Translator's note.*

left its stamp on the course of the game. The opening was played rather unusually by both sides.

Spassky and I in turn offered pawn sacrifices, and then Black offered the exchange, although this sacrifice also remained 'behind the scenes'. On the 23rd move I considered the position to be sufficiently simple and level, and I offered a draw. White decided that he could, without risk, continue the struggle, and perhaps he was right. In any case, it was I who committed the first mistake, after which Spassky seized the initiative. He conducted the middle section of the game superbly and at the adjournment Black's position gave serious call for alarm. Play was to resume in twelve hours' time.

One can easily imagine how I analysed the adjourned position, together with my trainer A. Koblents. At about five o'clock in the morning the analysis was terminated for 'technical reasons' (one of the analysts fell asleep). Nevertheless, when I went along to the resumption, I considered that the game should finish as a draw. That is how it should have been. For a long time Black maintained the equilibrium, though it is true that, in order to do this, he had to find a number of difficult moves. The strength of one of these was evidently underestimated by Spassky, who, by inertia continued playing for a win in a now level position. Now the advantage was on Black's side, and his counter-attack became irresistible.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **d4** | **♘f6** |
| **2** | **c4** | **e6** |
| **3** | **♘c3** | **♗b4** |
| **4** | **a3** | |

In preparing for this game we considered the moves 4 ♗g5 and 4 e3, which Spassky usually adopts as White. The Sämisch variation came as a surprise, and so I decided to avoid well-trodden paths.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **4** | **...** | **♗xc3+** |
| **5** | **bxc3** | **c5** |
| **6** | **e3** | **♘c6** |
| **7** | **♗d3** | **e5** |

The usual continuation is 7...0-0 8 ♘e2 b6 9 e4 ♘e8 etc., with a complicated game which theory considers to be rather in Black's favour. But suppose that White had something prepared? I decided to choose a different path.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **8** | **♘e2** | |

On 8 d5, Black would have obtained a good game by 8...e4, both in the case of 9 ♗c2 ♘e5 and after 9 dxc6 exd3 10 cxd7+ ♕xd7.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **8** | **...** | **e4** |
| **9** | **♗b1** | **b6** |
| **10** | **♘g3** | **♗a6** |

Black's idea is to restrain the advance of White's central pawns. Besides this, it is to Black's advantage to exchange off the white knight, which, as practice has shown, plays a very active role in the attack on the kingside. One only has to recall the wonderful game Botvinnik-Capablanca (AVRO 1938), where White sacrificed his knight on h5, or the Kotov-Unzicker

encounter (Stockholm 1952), in which a blow by this knight at g7 concluded the struggle.

**11 f3**

Keres points out that White could have won a pawn by 11 ♕a4 ♘a5 12 ♘xe4. This is true, but after 12...♘xe4 13 ♗xe4 ♖c8 Black quickly re-establishes material equality, maintaining a good position. 11 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 12 ♗xe4 ♗xc4 13 f3 was possible, with an unclear position.

**11 ... ♗xc4**

After 11...exf3 12 ♕xf3 ♗xc4 13 ♘f5 0-0 14 e4 White would have a very dangerous initiative.

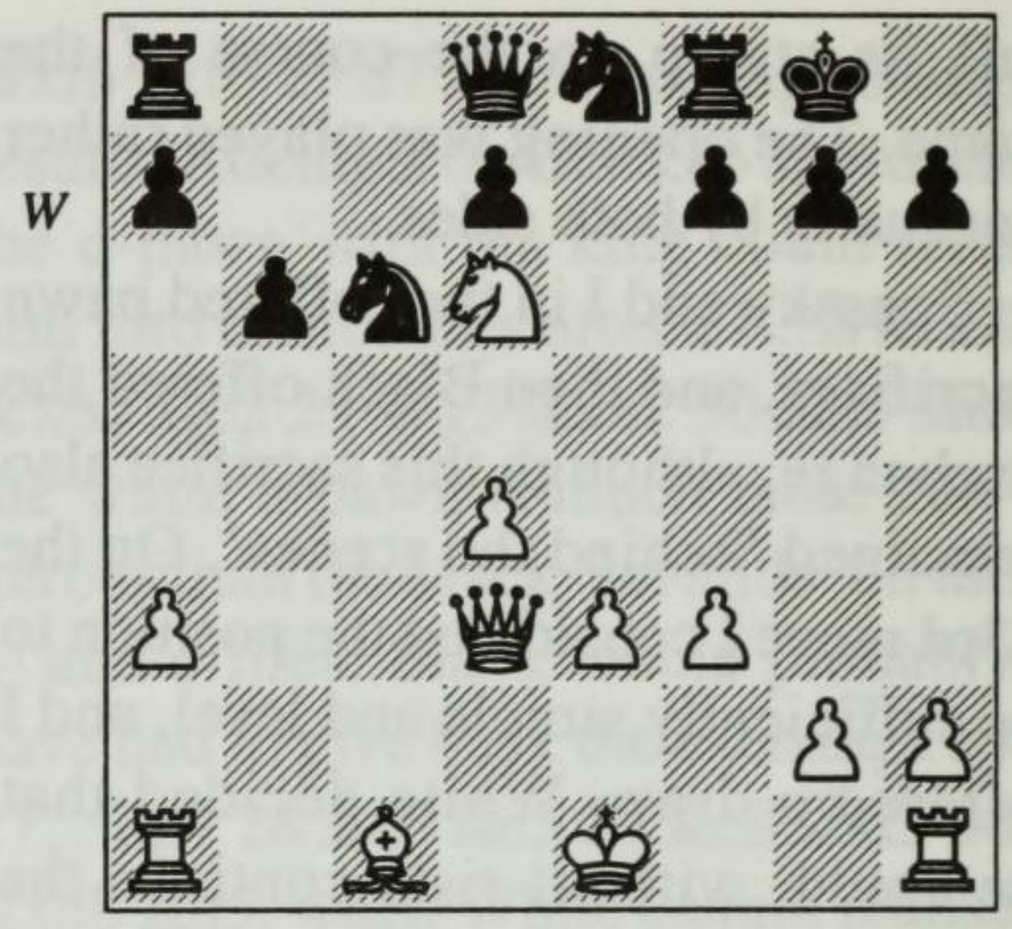
**12 ♘f5**

After 12 fxe4 d6 13 ♕f3 0-0 (weaker is 13...♖c8 14 ♘f5 0-0 15 ♕g3 ♘e8 16 e5) 14 e5 (otherwise it is difficult to activate White's pieces) 14...dxe5 15 ♕xc6 exd4 Black would obtain a strong attack on the white king, which is caught in the centre. With the move in the game White sets his opponent more difficult problems.

**12 ... 0-0**

The other possibility, 12...d5 13 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 14 ♘f5 ♖g8 15 ♘g3 was very risky, and led, most probably, to White's advantage.

**13 ♘d6 ♗d3**
**14 ♗xd3 exd3**
**15 ♕xd3 cxd4**
**16 cxd4 ♘e8!** *(D)*




Now White has to make a decision: either to exchange on e8, when he will have no initiative at all on the kingside, or else to retreat to f5.

**17 ♘f5 d5**
**18 a4**

18 ♕b5 ♖c8 19 a4 ♘d6 would also not prevent Black from carrying out his plan, since both 20 ♕xd5 ♘xf5 21 ♕xf5 ♘xd4 and 20 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 21 ♗a3 ♕e6 clearly favour Black.

**18 ... ♘d6**
**19 ♘xd6**

Not, of course, 19 ♗a3 ♘xf5 20 ♗xf8? ♕g5 with very strong threats for Black.

**19 ... ♕xd6**
**20 ♗a3 ♘b4**
**21 ♕b3 a5**
**22 0-0 ♖fc8**
**23 ♖ac1**

In this position I offered a draw, having the following variation in mind: 23...♕e6 24 ♗xb4 axb4 25 ♔f2 ♕d6 26 ♔g1 ♕e6.

**23 ... ♕e6**
**24 ♗xb4 axb4**
**25 ♔f2 ♕d6**
**26 h3**

White avoids the variation given above, but now, after 26...h5, it would

be Black who would hold the initiative. Instead of this there followed ...

**26 ... ♔f8?**

A routine move. The king moves towards the centre, but in some cases White will be able to capture the b-pawn with check, while the h-pawn is left undefended.

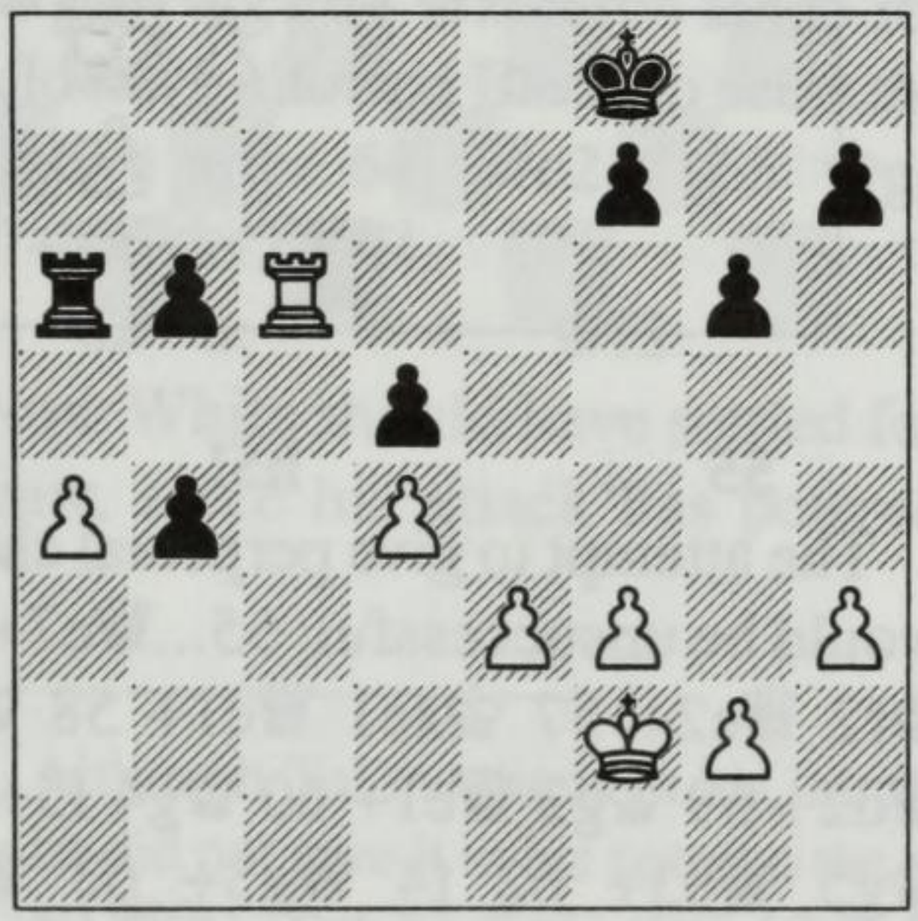
**27 ♖c2!**

White prepares to 'smoke out' Black from the c-file, by exploiting the unfortunate position of the black king.

**27 ... ♖xc2+**
**28 ♕xc2 g6**
**29 ♖c1**

Nothing was gained by 29 ♖b1 ♔g7 30 ♕b3 ♕c6 31 ♕xb4 ♖xa4 32 ♕xb6 in view of 32...♖a2+ 33 ♔g3 ♕c2 34 ♖g1 ♕f2+ 35 ♔h2 ♕xe3.

**29 ... ♕d7**
**30 ♕c6 ♕xc6**
**31 ♖xc6 ♖a6** *(D)*



More accurate was 31...♖xa4 32 ♖xb6 ♔e7 bringing the king over towards the rook. Most probably the game would then soon have been drawn, whereas now the struggle flares up with renewed strength.

**32 a5 b3**
**33 axb6**

After 33 ♖c3 b2 34 ♖b3 bxa5 35 ♖xb2 a4 36 ♖a2 a3 the ending is a draw.

**33 ... b2**
**34 b7 b1♕**
**35 ♖c8+ ♔g7**
**36 b8♕**

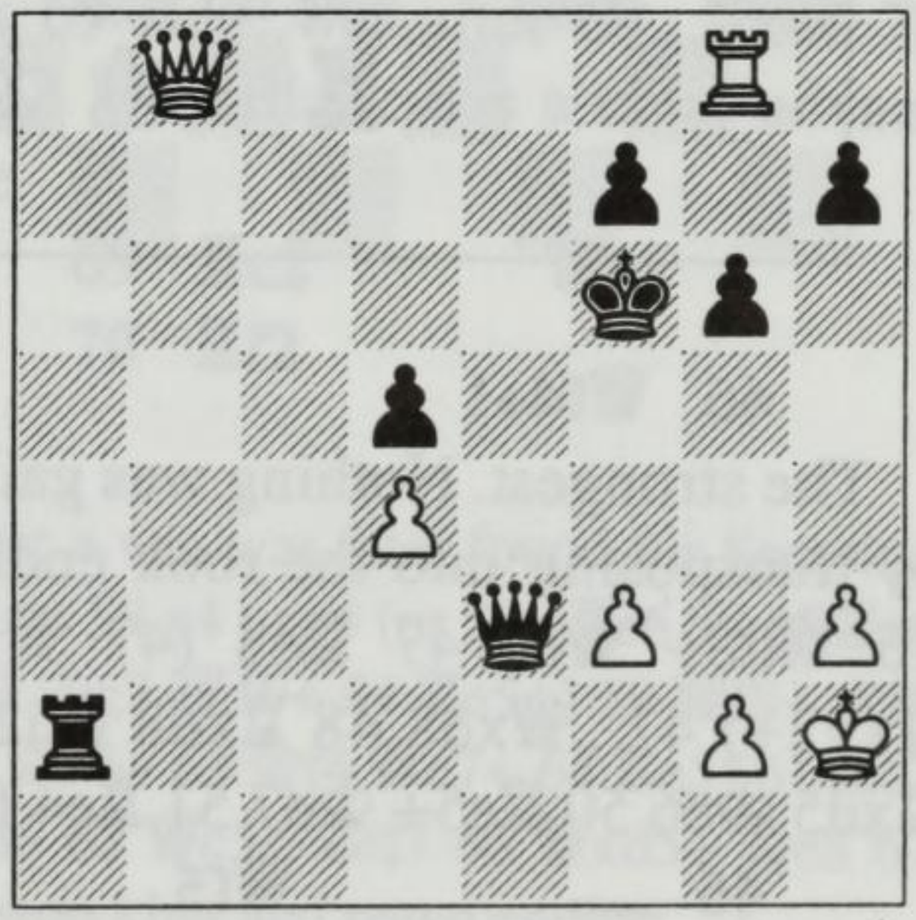
It is amusing that the two pawns have queened on the same file. Black now gives the first check, but this is not very important.

**36 ... ♖a2+**
**37 ♔g3 ♕e1+**
**38 ♔h2**

Or 38 ♔f4 ♖xg2!

**38 ... ♕xe3**
**39 ♖g8+ ♔f6** *(D)*

Black's task would have been easier after 39...♔h6 since if 40 ♕f8+ ♔h5 41 ♕xf7 then 41...♖xg2+! 42 ♔xg2 ♕d2+ with perpetual check.



**40 ♕d6+**

Interesting is 40 ♖e8 ♕xd4 41 ♖e2 but after 41...♖d2! 42 ♕h8+ ♔f5 43 ♕c8+ ♔g5 44 ♕c1 ♕f4+ 45 ♔h1 ♖d4! (but not 45...♖xe2 46 h4+ ♔f5 47 g4+ ♔e5 48 ♕c7+) Black remains with an extra pawn.

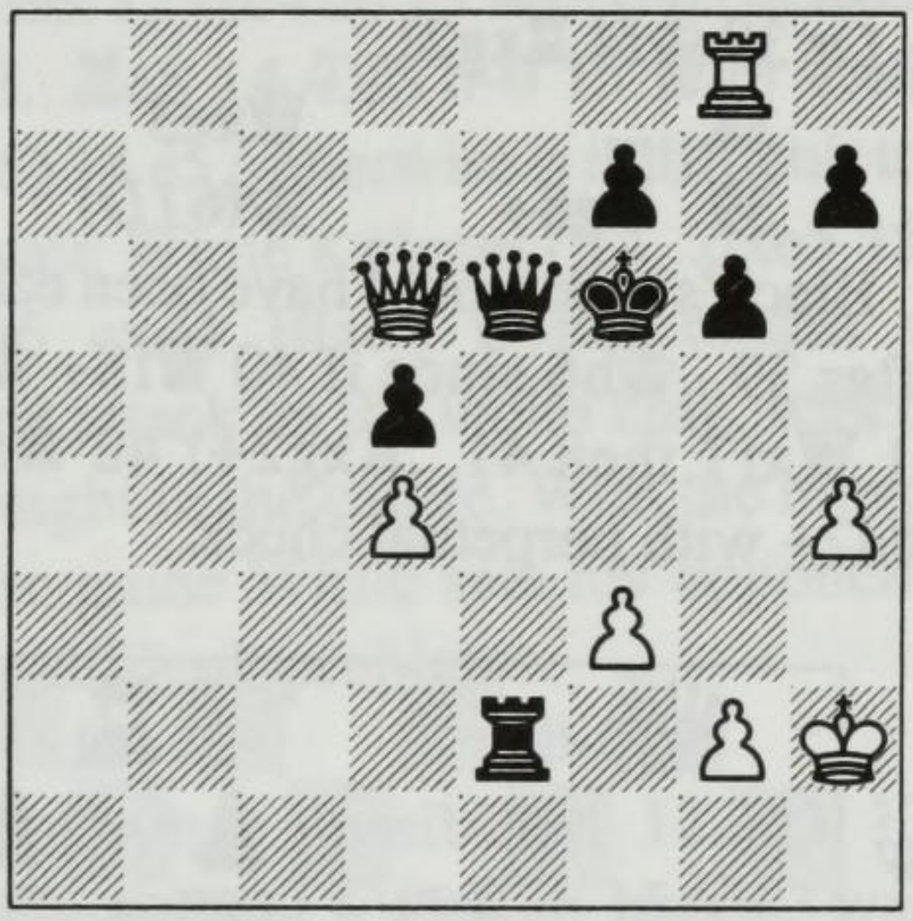
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **40** | **...** | **♕e6** |
| **41** | **♕f4+** | **♕f5** |
| **42** | **♕d6+** | **♕e6** |
| **43** | **♕g3** | **♕e3** |
| **44** | **h4** | **♖e2!** |

Weaker is the tempting 44...♖a1 45 ♕d6+ ♕e6 46 ♕f4+! (46 ♕d8+ ♕e7 47 ♕xd5 ♖h1+) 46...♕f5 47 ♕h6.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **45** | **♕d6+** | **♕e6** *(D)* |

At this point the game was adjourned.

*W*



**46 ♕f4+!**

The strongest. Nothing was gained by transposing into the rook ending: 46 ♕d8+ ♕e7 47 ♖e8 (47 ♕xd5 ♖xg2+) 47...♕xd8 48 ♖xd8 ♖d2 49 ♖xd5 ♔e6 50 ♖e5+ ♔d7 51 ♖e4 f5.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **46** | **...** | **♕f5** |

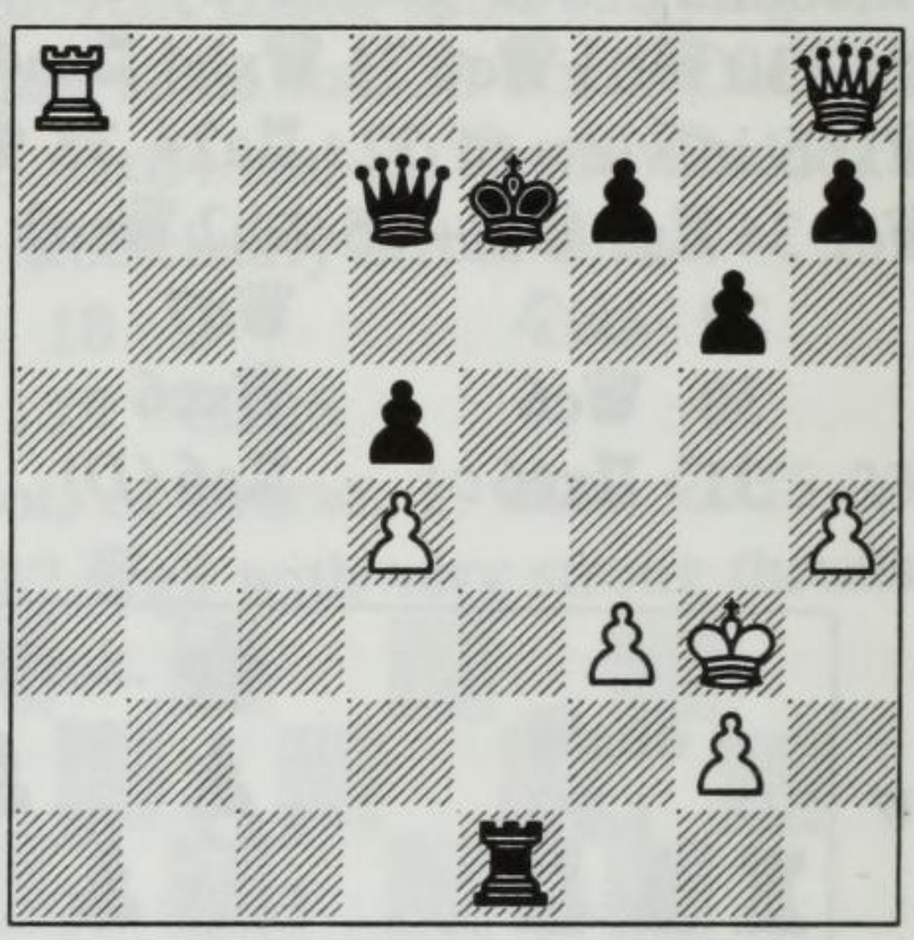
On 46...♔e7 White would have the possibility of seizing the square h4 for his queen by 47 h5! Black's defence would then be very difficult.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **47** | **♕h6** | **♔e7** |
| **48** | **♕f8+** | **♔f6** |
| **49** | **♕g7+** | **♔e7** |
| **50** | **♖a8!** | |

White forces the enemy pieces to retreat. In view of the threat of 51 ♖a7+ Black's next move is forced.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **50** | **...** | **♕d7** |
| **51** | **♕f8+** | **♔f6** |
| **52** | **♖a6+** | **♖e6** |
| **53** | **♕h8+** | **♔e7** |
| **54** | **♖a8** | **♖e1** |
| **55** | **♔g3** *(D)* | |

*B*



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **55** | **...** | **h5!** |

The attempt to give perpetual check would be unsuccessful: 55...♕c7+ 56 ♔f2 ♕c2+ 57 ♔xe1 ♕c1+ 58 ♔f2 ♕d2+ 59 ♔g3 ♕e1+ 60 ♔g4 f5+ 61 ♔g5 ♕e3+ 62 f4 ♕g3+ 63 ♔h6 ♕xh4+ 64 ♔g7 ♕f6+ 65 ♔xh7 ♕h4+ 66 ♔g8. With the move in the game Black prepares a refuge for his king on f5.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **56** | **♔f2** | **♖e6** |

**57 ♖c8!**

Now Black can move only his rook, since his queen is tied to the defence of the squares d5 and e8. In the case of 57...♕d6, 58 ♖e8+ and 59 ♖d8+ decides, while pawn moves are out of the question. The following line will not do: 57...♖c6 58 ♕f8+ ♔f6 59 ♖d8 ♕c7 60 ♕h8+ ♔e7 61 ♖e8+ ♔d7 62 ♖e5, since White carries out a favourable re-distribution of his forces. Black's reply is therefore forced.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **57** | **...** | **♖d6** |
| **58** | **♕f8+**[1] | **♔f6** |
| **59** | **♖e8** | **♖e6** |
| **60** | **♕h8+** | **♔f5** |
| **61** | **♕h6** | **♔f6** |

Not 61...♖xe8 (or 61...♕xe8) 62 ♕g5+ and White delivers mate next move.

**62 ♕h8+**

The win of a pawn by 62 ♖d8 ♕c6 63 ♕g5+ ♔g7 64 ♕xd5 (64 ♖xd5 f6) would have allowed Black to seize the initiative after 64...♕c2+[2] 65 ♔g3 ♕c7+ 66 ♔f2 ♕f4.

**62 ... ♔f5**

Now White should have settled for a draw, since his attack has petered out.

**63 ♖d8 ♕c6**

More accurate than 63...♕b5 64 ♔g3 ♖e2 65 ♔h3 with the threat of 66 g4+. Now Black threatens to start a dangerous counter-attack by 64...♕c2.

**64 ♖c8?**

He should have played 64 ♔g3.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **64** | **...** | **♕a6** |
| **65** | **♔g3** | **♕d6+** |
| **66** | **♔h3** | |

White is also in a bad way after 66 ♔f2 ♕f4 (or h2).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **66** | **...** | **♖e1** |
| **67** | **g3** | |

He cannot play 67 g4+ hxg4+ 68 fxg4+ ♔f4 69 ♕h6+ ♔e4! 70 ♖e8+ ♔f3.

**67 ... ♖g1**

Unclear was 67...♕a6 68 g4+ hxg4+ 69 fxg4+ ♔f4 70 ♕h6+ ♔f3 71 ♖c3+ ♔e4 72 ♕d2[3].

**68 f4 ♖e1**

Threatening to transfer the queen to e6, and then penetrate into the enemy camp. The only defence against this was 69 ♖e8, but after 69...♖xe8 70 ♕xe8 ♕e6 Black has a clear advantage.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **69** | **♖c2** | **♕e6** |
| **70** | **♖f2** | |

---

1 Although Tal mentions in his introduction that a win was later found for Spassky, he did not give it in his notes to the game. It runs 58 g4 hxg4 (or 58...♖e6 59 g5 ♖c6 60 ♕f8+ ♔e6 61 ♖e8+ ♔f5 62 ♖e7 ♖c2+ 63 ♔g3 ♕d6+ 64 ♖e5+) 59 ♕f8+ ♔f6 60 fxg4 ♖e6 (60...♖c6 61 ♖e8 ♖c2+ 62 ♔f3 ♖c3+ 63 ♔f4 ♕c7+ 64 ♖e5) 61 ♖c3 ♖e4 62 ♖f3+ ♔e6 63 g5 ♕e7 64 ♕c8+ ♔d6 65 ♕c5+ ♔d7 66 ♕xd5+ ♔e8 67 ♕xe4 ♕xe4 68 ♖e3 ♕xe3+ 69 ♔xe3 with a won king and pawn ending.

2 64...♕c3! wins for Black immediately.

3 This is not unclear as 72...♖h1+ mates in four. Tal probably intended 72 ♔g3 ♕f1 72 ♕d2.

No better was 70 ♕c8 ♕xc8 71 ♖xc8 ♖e4.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **70** | **...** | **♖h1+** |
| **71** | **♔g2** | **♕e4+** |
| **72** | **♖f3** | **♔g4** |
| **73** | **♕c8+** | **f5** |

**0-1**

On 74 ♕c3 there follows 74...♖f1.

Game 20

**Tal – Djurasević**

*Student Olympiad, Varna 1958*

Sicilian Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **c5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **♘c6** |
| **3** | **d4** | **cxd4** |
| **4** | **♘xd4** | **♘f6** |
| **5** | **♘c3** | **d6** |
| **6** | **♗g5** | **e6** |
| **7** | **♕d2** | **a6** |
| **8** | **0-0-0** | **h6** |
| **9** | **♗f4** | |

Recently the move 9 ♗e3 has found more supporters. However, I assumed that my opponent would be expecting this move and so preferred to retreat my bishop to a different square.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **9** | **...** | **♗d7** |
| **10** | **♘xc6** | **♗xc6** |
| **11** | **f3** | **♕b6** |

In encounters with Soviet players, foreign masters often adopt Soviet theoretical innovations. Such is the influence of our chess thinking! The move 11...♕b6 first occurred in the game Uusi-Shagalovich (Minsk 1957). There followed 12 ♗xd6 0-0-0 13 e5 ♘e8 14 ♕f4 ♘xd6 15 exd6 ♖d7 and Black soon won back his pawn to obtain an excellent position. It is clear, however, that 12 ♗xd6, allowing the bishop to be pinned, is not to be recommended.

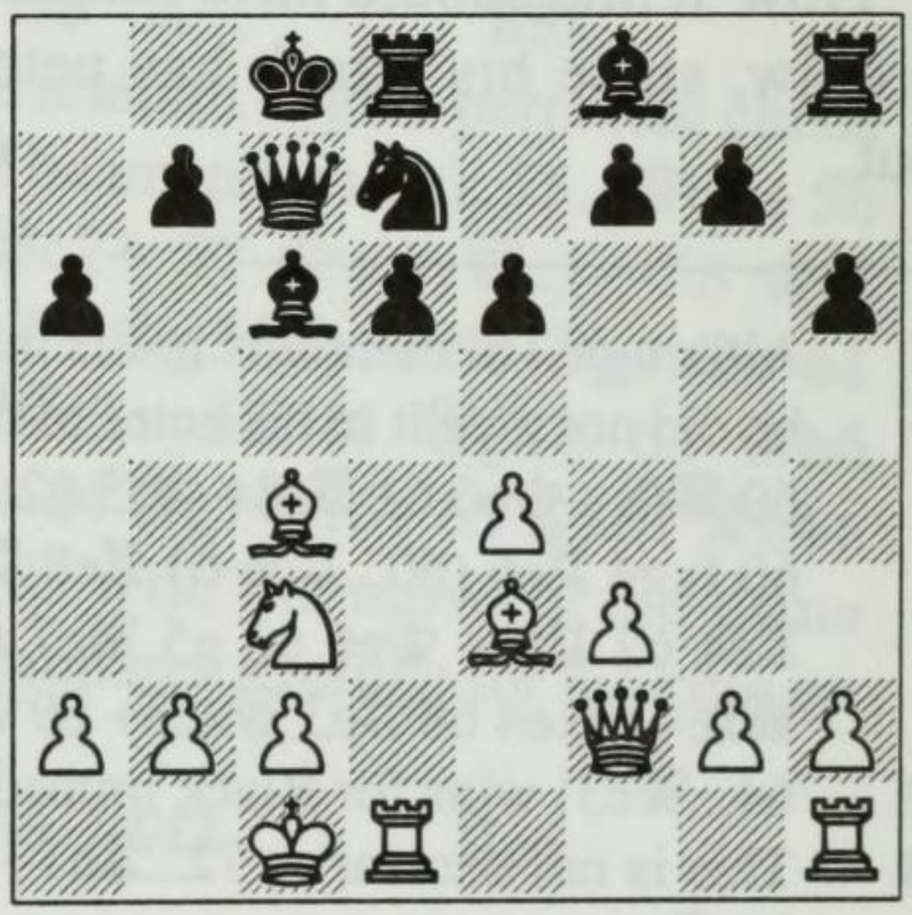
**12 ♗c4**

This also is not new. It was played by Boleslavsky against Averbakh in the 25th USSR Championship.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | **...** | **0-0-0** |
| **13** | **♗e3** | **♕c7** |
| **14** | **♕f2** | **♘d7** *(D)* |

On 14...d5 White would not, of course, have concluded the game by repeating moves with 15 ♗b6 ♕f4+ 16 ♗e3 ♕c7 17 ♗b6 but would have played 15 exd5 exd5 16 ♗b3, with the better chances in view of the weakness of Black's d-pawn.

After the text, direct play for an attack is unlikely to bring White success: his only active plan – the advance of his f-pawn – involves weakening the important e4-square. But what if we try advancing the pawn to f4 nevertheless? After all, weaknesses are created in Black's position as well!



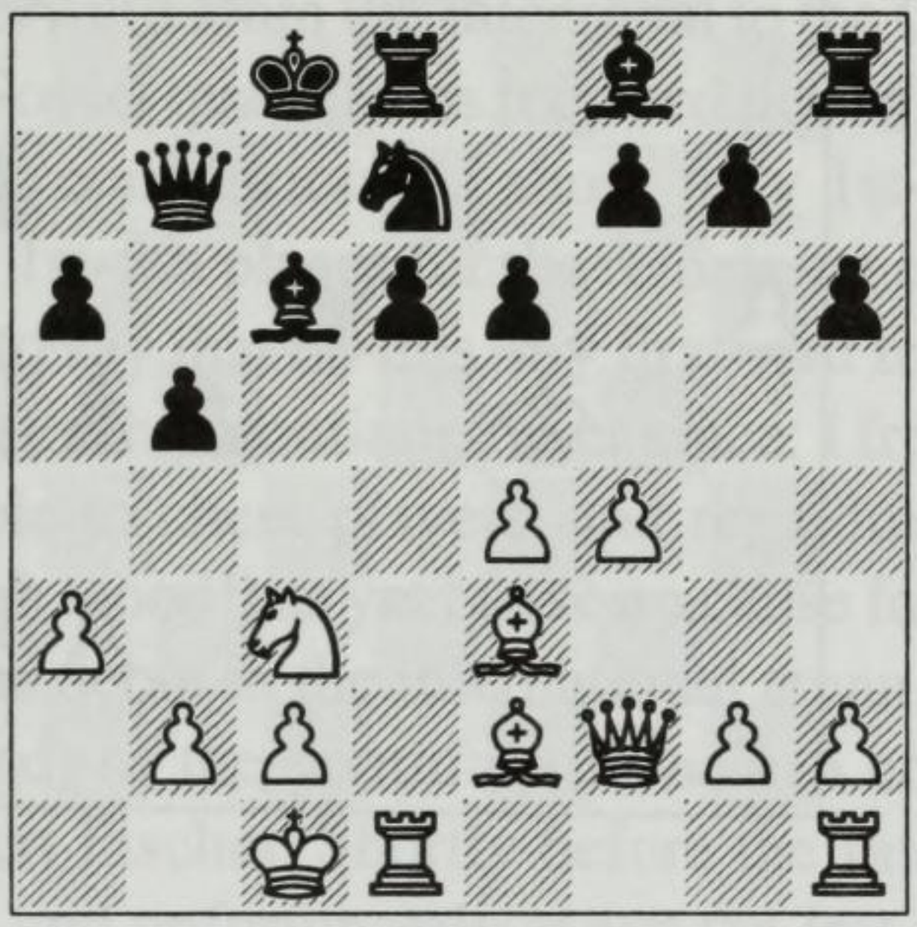
**15 f4 b5!**

Correct! White was intending to provoke the advance of the e-pawn by 16 f5, thus establishing control over the d5-square. 15...♘c5 would have failed to 16 e5!

**16 ♗e2 ♕b7**

Preparing 17...b4, and attacking White's e-pawn.

**17 a3** *(D)*



*B*

**17 ... ♗e7?**

Black presents his opponent with an important tempo. The fate of the plan chosen by White depends on the assessment of the following variation: 17...♘f6 18 e5 ♘d5 19 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 20 ♖d2.

I considered this position to be more promising for White: he can begin active operations along the d-file, playing ♗f3 at the appropriate moment. It must be taken into account that the exchange ...dxe5 is unfavourable for Black, since he is left with a backward f-pawn, while 20...♗xg2 is dangerous, for example: 21 ♖hd1 ♗d5 22 f5 dxe5 23 fxe6 fxe6 24 ♗g4 ♖d7 25 ♖xd5 exd5 26 ♕f7 with the threats of 27 ♖xd5 and 27 ♕e8+.

It would be dangerous to capture the e-pawn: after 17...♗xe4 18 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 19 ♖d4 followed by f5 White has two strong bishops and a dangerous initiative.

**18 ♗f3 ♘f6**

Now this move is too late. In the case of 18...♘c5 White could have played, besides the simple 19 e5, the risky 19 ♘d5 ♗f8 (19...exd5 20 exd5 ♗d7 21 ♗xc5 dxc5 22 d6) 20 ♘b4 ♘xe4 21 ♕h4 ♗e7 22 ♕xe7 ♕xe7 23 ♘xc6 ♕c7 24 ♘xd8 d5 25 ♖d3 ♔b8 26 ♖hd1 and, although his knight will perish, White has an active position.

**19 e5 ♘e4**
**20 ♘xe4 ♗xe4**
**21 ♗xe4 ♕xe4**
**22 ♗b6!**

White's position is superior, but urgent measures are required otherwise Black will consolidate by ...♕c6 and ...d5.

**22 ... ♖d7**
**23 ♖he1 ♕b7**

The only move. If 23...♕c6, then 24 ♖d3 ♔b7 25 ♗a5 dxe5 26 ♖c3 ♕d6 27 fxe5 and Black cannot defend the b6-square since on 27...♕d4 White wins by 28 ♖c7+.

**24 exd6 ♖xd6**

White would also gain the advantage after 24...♗xd6 25 ♗d4, followed by 26 f5!

**25 ♖xd6 ♗xd6**
**26 ♕d4 ♗c7**

It is not difficult to see that Black has nothing better. Unsatisfactory is 26...♗xf4+ 27 ♕xf4 ♕xb6 28 ♕xf7 with material gain.

**27 ♗xc7!**

Also possible was 27 ♕xg7 ♗xf4+ 28 ♔b1 ♖e8 29 g3 winning a pawn, but the move made is without doubt more logical. Now, in order to free himself from the pressure of White's actively placed pieces, Black decides to go into a pawn ending.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **27** | **...** | **♕xc7** |
| **28** | **♖d1** | **♖d8** |
| **29** | **♕xd8+** | **♕xd8** |
| **30** | **♖xd8+** | **♔xd8** |
| **31** | **♔d2** | **♔d7** |

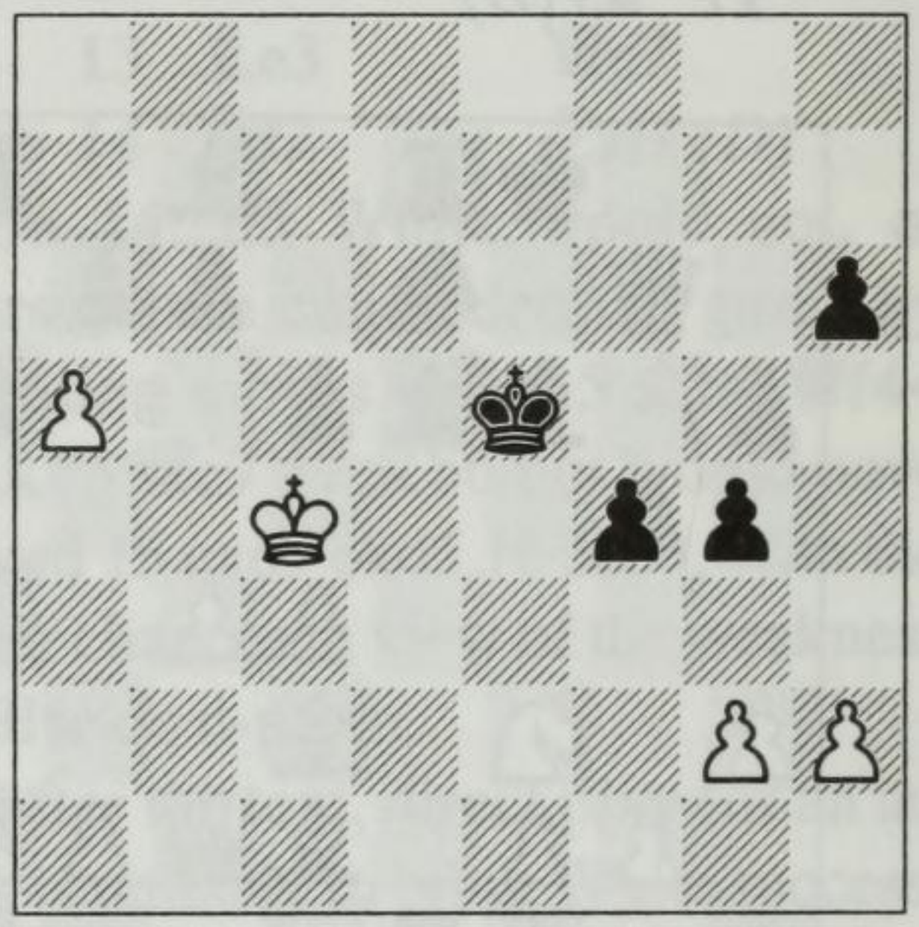
31...g5 fails to 32 fxg5 hxg5 33 h3 when White obtains passed pawns on both flanks. From here on events are forced.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **32** | **♔d3** | **♔d6** |
| **33** | **c4** | **bxc4+** |
| **34** | **♔xc4** | **e5** |
| **35** | **fxe5+** | **♔xe5** |
| **36** | **b4** | **f5** |
| **37** | **b5** | **axb5+** |
| **38** | **♔xb5** | **f4** |
| **39** | **a4** | **g5** |
| **40** | **a5** | **g4** |

Black also loses after 40...♔d6 41 ♔c4 ♔c6 42 ♔d4 ♔b5 43 ♔e4 ♔xa5 44 ♔f5 ♔b4 45 h3 ♔c3 46 ♔g6 ♔d2 47 ♔xh6 ♔e3 48 ♔xg5.

**41 ♔c4!** *(D)* **1-0**

*B*



On 41...♔e4 White's a-pawn promotes with check, while after 41...♔d6 White's king succeeds in eliminating the black pawns.

# 3 The Road to the World Championship

The Interzonal Tournament was now approaching; incidentally, this was the first individual international event in my career.

The conditions in the tournament were rather severe. For the first time, the rule came into force that, from any one country (read – USSR!) no more than two (at first), and then no more than three (as was decided after 12 rounds) players could go forward from the Interzonal to the Candidates Tournament. Therefore, each of the Soviet quartet was required not only to win, but to come ahead of at least one of his compatriots. In short, only 1st-3rd places guaranteed success, compared with 1st-6th places for the remaining contestants. Jumping ahead a little, I would like to say that on this, my first visit to Yugoslavia, I played well, and this happy tradition has continued ever since: I frequently visit this country, which is so hospitable to chess players, and regarding my results in tournaments and matches (touch wood!) as yet I have no cause for complaint. Great interest was also roused by the debut in the international arena (as far as the World Championship is concerned) of the youthful (if one can consider a mere 15 year-old to be a youth) Robert Fischer. Shortly before the Interzonal he stopped off in Moscow for the first, and unfortunately as yet the last time, but there he only played a few lightning games. He was often asked to give interviews (at that time Robert would still agree to this), and everyone was startled by the fact that Fischer, answering questions quite freely, said that on the whole he would have expected to take first place, but that this would be difficult, since first place could be taken by Bronstein. As far as I am aware, this is the first and last time that Fischer voluntarily put someone else ahead of himself. However, Fischer had no doubt at all that he would finish in the first six.

'But how will you do this', correspondents asked him.

'Very simply. I reckon that I have to find five opponents against whom I can win. This means that I will win five games, and draw the rest', Fischer replied.

'And suppose you lose to someone?'

'That's nothing to worry about; then I will have to win six games.'

At first it seemed that this was nothing more than youthful bravado, since in the early rounds Fischer played badly. At the start he drew with Neikirch, having had the inferior position as White as early as the 14th move. Two moves later the Bulgarian Champion unexpectedly offered a draw. When the journalists asked him why he had done this, Neikirch replied:

'It was somehow embarrassing to win against the lad, on my return home to Bulgaria they would laugh at me.'

Following this, Fischer won a lost game against the little-known master Fuster and, within a day or two, in crushing style ... lost to Benko. From then on, amazingly, the young player improved literally with every round. The draw brought him up against all our players somewhere in the middle of the tournament. His first opponent was Bronstein, then Averbakh, myself and Petrosian. All four games were very tense, and our players were by no means peaceably inclined, but nevertheless all the games were drawn. My encounter with the American Champion was fairly sharp. A roughly equal position was reached, but I very much wanted to avoid drawing with this boy, so I played riskily, after which Fischer gained a dangerous attack. Then he made a mistake, and with an unexpected move I seized the initiative. At this point Fischer offered me a draw, but I declined. He was in time-trouble, and, with literally only seconds remaining on his clock, on the 39th move found the only reply, a very strong one, which enabled him to maintain the equilibrium. The game was adjourned, but the following day I myself offered a draw, since it was clear that neither Black nor White could win. Before this I had managed to start the tournament fairly well, but then there followed a highly annoying defeat at the hands of Matanović. In a fashionable variation of the Sicilian Defence I played very carelessly in the opening, and went to win a piece, but this turned out to be a variation prepared by my opponent. I am not especially accustomed to defending, and although I obtained excellent drawing chances thanks to my opponent's mistakes, I nevertheless lost. Therefore on the following day I went along to play Filip in the mood 'win or bust'. In a sharp position I decided on a piece sacrifice, which, if declined, would lead to a slightly inferior position for Filip, while its acceptance would have unpredictable consequences. It would appear that the sacrifice was not 100% correct, but before making his move and capturing the piece, Filip offered me a draw. I realised that there was something in the character of the position that my opponent did not like, so I declined the offer, and in the subsequent confusion somehow outwitted him. It was at that time that the following phrase originated, addressed by one of the spectators to my second: 'If Tal has an open file, then there will be a mate!'. Although to be honest, it should be said that in this particular game there was no great likelihood of a mate. In the middle of the tournament there came a sort of pause of three successive draws, and, reckoning that I had no right to such 'peacefulness' (although all three games were quite hard fought), in my game with Rossetto I declined a draw in a position which was perhaps even rather dubious. This affected my opponent, who proceeded to lose in the concluding stage for no particular reason. Then came a win over Benko, and I established myself in

the leading group. I could be fairly sure of my entry into the Candidates Tournament.

It was the two final rounds, in which I met in turn the young Western players Panno and Olafsson, which proved to be decisive as regards the winner of the tournament. I was leading, since Larsen, angered by the loss he had suffered at my hands the previous day, had played with great enthusiasm against my nearest rival Petrosian, and had defeated him. Then came the ordeal of the last two rounds. The game with Panno gave me enormous satisfaction, and it was later awarded the prize for the most interesting game of the tournament (it is given here with notes). However, it was adjourned in a highly complicated position, and we racked our brains for a long time, trying to find a way to win. Tired, I decided to have a quick draw with Olafsson. In my youthful ignorance, I never considered that my opponent might play for a win.

Once again I played the opening very light-heartedly, quickly exchanged several pieces, but failed to make an accurate, very essential move. I offered a draw immediately after this. Olafsson declined. Only then did I look more deeply into the position, and realised that my offer of a draw had been somewhat tactless. In short, my opponent adjourned the game in a completely won position. The games were to be resumed the following day. A win against Panno was considerably more doubtful than a defeat against Olafsson. We put the game against the Argentinean Grandmaster to one side, and began looking through the possibilities in the quiet, dull rook ending against the Icelander, every minute becoming more and more convinced that things were very, very bad.

In the end we hit upon an idea which at first sight seemed completely absurd, whereby I simply moved my king away from the enemy passed pawn, but where we found some ways for my opponent to go wrong. In the alternative case my opponent would have to demonstrate some elementary technical knowledge, whereas here I could lose much more quickly, but Olafsson would also have the chance to make a mistake.

Koblents and I showed our analysis to Lev Abramov, the leader of our delegation, and asked him what he, a chess master, would do in such a case. He unhesitatingly opted for the second possibility. The game with Panno was the first to be resumed, and it ended surprisingly easily, since Panno had considered his position to be lost, and had not analysed it very carefully. After this, employing my not very great acting talent, I resumed my game against Olafsson, and tried to play as confidently as possible, especially since Olafsson, as was his habit, had thought for a long time over his sealed move – 45 minutes – and had relatively little time left. Of course, in normal circumstances this would have been sufficient to win, but Olafsson also became nervous. When I led my king away from his pawn, he

sank into thought, and used up a further six minutes. His first move was correct, his second also, but on the third move he went wrong, and a drawn position was reached by force. After this the question of first place was essentially decided.

JOURNALIST. *Didn't such a meteoric rise frighten you to some extent?*

CHESS PLAYER. To be honest, I thought that everything was going quite normally, and besides, I have always been of the opinion that, of the two evils – under-estimation and over-estimation of one's own strength – the former is much the more harmful. Almost directly from Portorož, we set off to the Olympiad in Munich. Petrosian and I were making our debuts in the role of reserves, although certain of my friends said that to some extent this belittled the achievement of twice winning the Championship of the Soviet Union. However, I was very well aware that Botvinnik, playing on board one, and Smyslov on board two, and Keres and Bronstein had given a great deal more to chess than had Tal or Petrosian, and so, as far as I was concerned, this team order was the only one possible. Besides, I had never played against Botvinnik or Smyslov, I had once come ahead of Keres by half a point, which does not mean a great deal, while Bronstein had always been my idol.

At the Olympiad, Petrosian and I had a comparatively easy task, since at that time the class of play of our opponents on the bottom boards was not especially high. We both made a pretty good score. A couple of games stick in my mind, and especially the one with Trifunović, which was very interesting. When, prior to the match, the Yugoslavs were deciding who to put up against Tal, they chose the 'old fox', as Trifunović was called by the Yugoslavs themselves, a highly tenacious player, stubborn in defence although insufficiently aggressive.

I played this game with great enthusiasm, for I realised that to win against Trifunović was a problem of, so to speak, increased complexity. In addition, he very much wanted not to lose. After the game, Trifunović's colleagues came up and congratulated him on the draw, since at one time his position had appeared somewhat dubious. He replied: 'Yes, I got a draw, but it wasn't at all easy'.

Seventeen years later, in the International Tournament at Las Palmas, I was playing against the Yugoslav Grandmaster Ljubojević, who in 1975 was of roughly the same age as I had been in 1958! In this game I got into a difficult position, but then after highly interesting complications it ended in a draw. This time the other players came up and congratulated me on my good defence, and I quite involuntarily repeated Trifunović's phrase: 'Yes, but it wasn't at all easy'.

JOURNALIST. *Did you think in Munich that you might possibly have to play a match against Botvinnik?*

CHESS PLAYER. Not really. The Candidates Tournament was due to take place a year later, and it seemed a long way off, but I gained great pleasure from watching the play of the World Champion.

JOURNALIST. *Did you examine it closely?*

CHESS PLAYER. No, no, not specially. Simply for the first time I was on the same stage where the Champion was playing, and was present when he was analysing. This made a great impression on me, almost as if I were an amateur.

1959 began, as was the tradition at that time, with the Championship of the Soviet Union. I set off for Tbilisi 'burdened' by having been twice USSR Champion. I realised perfectly well that it was somewhat unusual and 'improper' for one player to win the Championship twice in a row. I further realised that, on this occasion, the other contestants, even without themselves suspecting it, would form a sort of coalition against me, for to become Champion for the third time running would be simply too much. The effusive Mark Taimanov even stated that if this should be possible and should happen, he would give up chess. Thus, by not taking first place at Tbilisi, I performed a good deed for chess ...

I arrived late in Tbilisi. My first round game, against Taimanov as it happened, was postponed. My first result in the table was the traditional nought, obtained in my game with the young player Yukhtman, who played the Scotch Gambit against me. In striving for more than equality, I at some stage overestimated my chances, and came under an attack which my opponent conducted very accurately.

As I have already said, this type of defeat acts as a spur to me, and in the next two rounds I defeated Polugaevsky and Geller, in two very interesting games. Then came draws with Keres and Lutikov, and a win against Krogius, whereupon I had to play Petrosian, who had begun the tournament highly successfully, and was playing with great verve. Tbilisi was after all the town where he had been born, and the town where he had grown up; on his 'home ground' he very much wanted to win. As usual, he did not lose any games, but he won more often than in, say, the Championship of the previous year. However, our game was postponed due to his being unwell, and this somehow affected me, for I realised that the encounter was very important in the battle for the leaders' jersey. In the following round I received a most unexpected stroke of fortune. The master Nezhmetdinov, who always played against me with great relish, once again conducted the whole game splendidly, and obtained a completely won position, but then made a bad blunder, and lost. This victory did not give me any particular pleasure, and although I then defeated Averbakh, I had the feeling that retribution was not far off. I even appeared on Georgian television and said that I was unaccustomed

to the idea of being the potential leader after the tenth round, and that to be honest, I was afraid it would not continue for long.

That is exactly what happened; retribution came the following day. Exploiting my over-active play, the young player Gufeld, who had apparently always held me in respect and even a certain trepidation, on this occasion was in a very aggressive mood. We castled on opposite sides and I was happy about this until it became apparent that his attack was developing significantly faster than mine.

Some five rounds before the finish, Petrosian and I played off our postponed game, which, like the majority of the ones we had played previously, ended in a draw. The decisive role, which ensured that in this Championship I essentially took no part in the struggle for first place, was played by an episode which occurred when the adjourned games were played off.

At that point I had accumulated three adjournments: against Gurgenidze, Vasiukov and Spassky. In the last I had a certain, perhaps even decisive, positional advantage in the endgame, but I fully appreciated that physically it would be simply impossible to analyse all three positions, especially since in all three a hard fight was in prospect.

After finding out from a control colleague in what order I would have to play off the games, and having made sure that, except in extreme circumstances, the game with Spassky would be played off last, I considered it my duty to warn Boris that I would do everything possible to ensure that our game was not resumed that day. He fully understood my position, and agreed, especially since he had only one game adjourned.

We arrived for the resumption. There was a slight complication in that Vasiukov, whose game with me was due to be played off second, first had to play Lutikov. I sat down against Gurgenidze, and apologised to my opponent, saying that I was going to play very unhurriedly, since I did not want our game to end before Vasiukov finished his game with Lutikov.

With an unexpected move, which had been found literally an hour before the resumption, I succeeded in quickly obtaining a decisive advantage against Gurgenidze. I attempted not to force matters, while maintaining my advantage, especially since in the adjourned game with Vasiukov my knight was much stronger than his bishop, and the character of the position was such that my knight could roam all round the board before I had to undertake decisive action. Thus the possibility of the game with Spassky being resumed appeared to be ruled out.

Then Lutikov reached a position with king, bishop and knight against Vasiukov's lone king. I thought that their game would be over at any minute, so I forced matters, and Gurgenidze resigned. But at this point Vasiukov, in his game against Lutikov, continued calmly and imperturbably seeking the only legal move

with his king. The controllers waited for the customary 15 minutes, and then began looking for Spassky, but he had taken me at my word, and had not arrived for the resumption. The control team began discussing the matter. One of the controllers suggested that the Lutikov-Vasiukov game should be interrupted, but this would have meant helping Lutikov to find the winning method, although only formally, since the strong master was well familiar with the technique of mating with bishop and knight against a lone king, and it was Vasiukov who was dragging things out. The formal point of view nevertheless prevailed. Spassky was found somewhere, and we sat down to resume our game. It was not at all surprising that within some 20 minutes I made a mistake, and now Spassky gained the advantage. Even so, the game finished in a draw, which gave Petrosian the chance to consolidate his position as leader.

My traditional loss to Korchnoi in the penultimate round allowed Petrosian to practically assure himself of first place. In the final round all three contenders for the medals drew their games. The result was gold for Petrosian, and silver for Spassky and myself.

Personally, I didn't feel that I could complain about the result although, for some reason, it was considered by some that a share of second and third places was practically a failure for me.

Then I returned to Riga where, within some four to six weeks, the Latvian Chess Olympiad took place. The tournament was run on the Swiss System of which I had the most unhappy memories, since three years previously I had suffered a failure in such a tournament. In addition, I very much wanted my trainer, Koblents, to take part in this tournament, since on the whole he appeared in important events rather rarely. I did everything I could to talk him into it and I even said that if we had to play each other, and I had White, then I would offer him a draw in advance. I don't think that it was particularly because of this, but, be that as it may, Koblents agreed to play. Starved of tournament chess, he played with great relish, and after five rounds we had drawn away from the other competitors, and headed the tournament table with five points each. We naturally met in the sixth round, with Koblents having White. A familiar situation, wouldn't you agree? Let anyone who has never in his life acted in this way cast stones upon me, but if the Maestro had offered me a draw before the game, it would have been instantly accepted. However, Koblents kept quiet, and the game began in fairly serious fashion. I chose the French Defence, with which I have never been particularly successful, and obtained a dubious position, which around move 16-17 became lost, and everyone realised this. At this point, when it was his turn to move, Koblents offered me a draw. The position was such that he could himself force perpetual check, or could slowly and surely convert his advantage into a

win, or else he could apparently win immediately, but here he would fall into a trap.

I could not agree to a draw in a lost position, since I have never been disposed to accepting charity, and I thought to myself: 'If he is really offering me a draw, then he will give perpetual check'. So I left it up to him to make the choice.

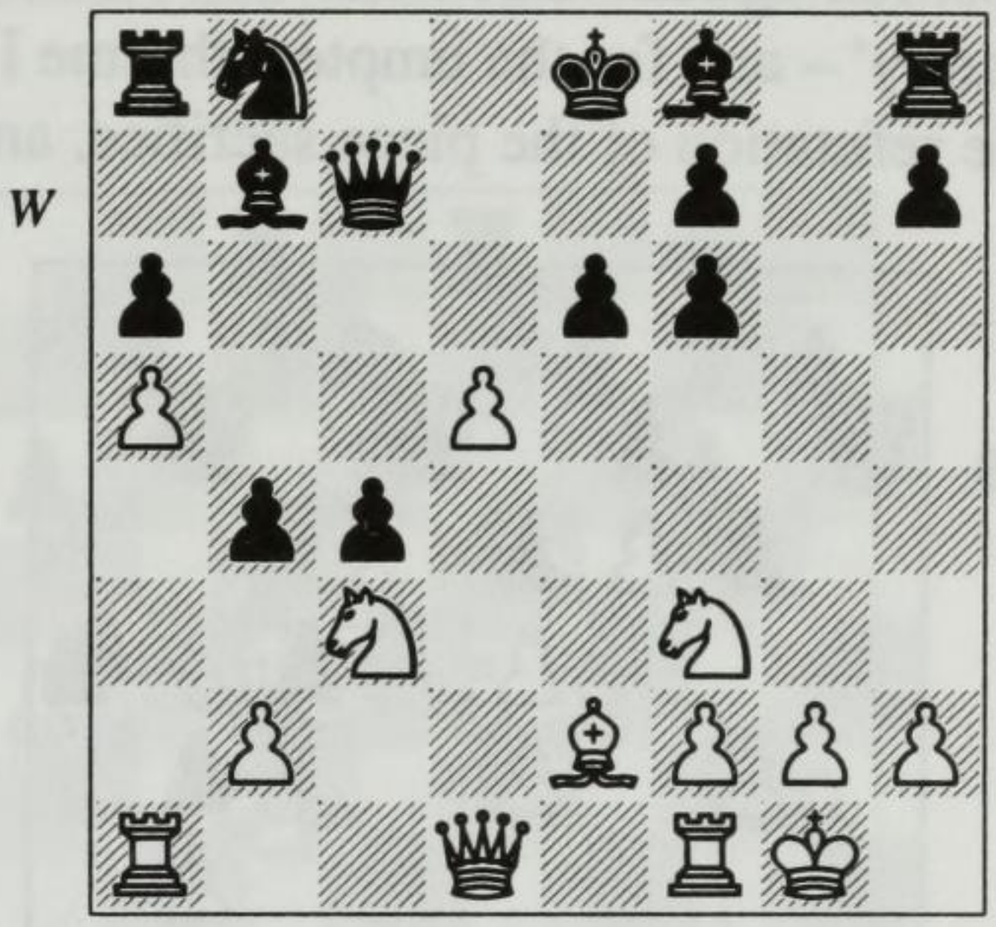
Such 'independence' on my part apparently annoyed my old colleague, and after a few minutes' thought the Maestro very emotionally (outwardly at any rate) carried out the winning combination. In doing so he fell into the trap, about which I have already spoken, and soon an endgame, slightly favourable for me, was reached. A draw could have been agreed, but now it was I who felt offended: after all, the Maestro had spurned perpetual check. After the game had been adjourned, contrary to tradition, we sat in opposite corners of the hall, eating our sandwiches and analysing the same position, but exchanging light-hearted comments. On resumption I managed to win around move 75. Koblents understood the course of my thoughts, and realised that I had acted, as it were, according to the highest principles.

Soon after this a tournament began which was organised to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Zurich Chess Club, one of the oldest in Europe. This was my first individual international event, not connected with the battle for the World Championship. I travelled to it with Grandmaster Keres, whose company I have always found enjoyable and relaxing. Play came easily to me in Zurich, although in the first round I suffered my 'traditional' defeat, on this occasion at the hands of the Swiss master Bhend. Keres jokingly reassured me, saying that I had lost to a player who was practically a compatriot. The point was that not long before the tournament, at the International Festival for Young People and Students in Moscow, Bhend had met a Russian girl and had married her.

After my initial misfortune, I succeeded in winning four games in a row in fairly entertaining style, with tactical blows of the sort that so appeal to fans. Incidentally, it was in Zurich that I first came across a system of material stimulation for results. The prize-money awarded to the participants for the number of points gained was unusual: in cash terms, two half-points were not equivalent to the same point gained by means of a win and a loss. If the many years have not affected my everyday memory – as yet I cannot complain about my chess memory! – a draw was 'worth' 25 francs, and a win 60. There was even a consolation of 10 francs for a defeat.

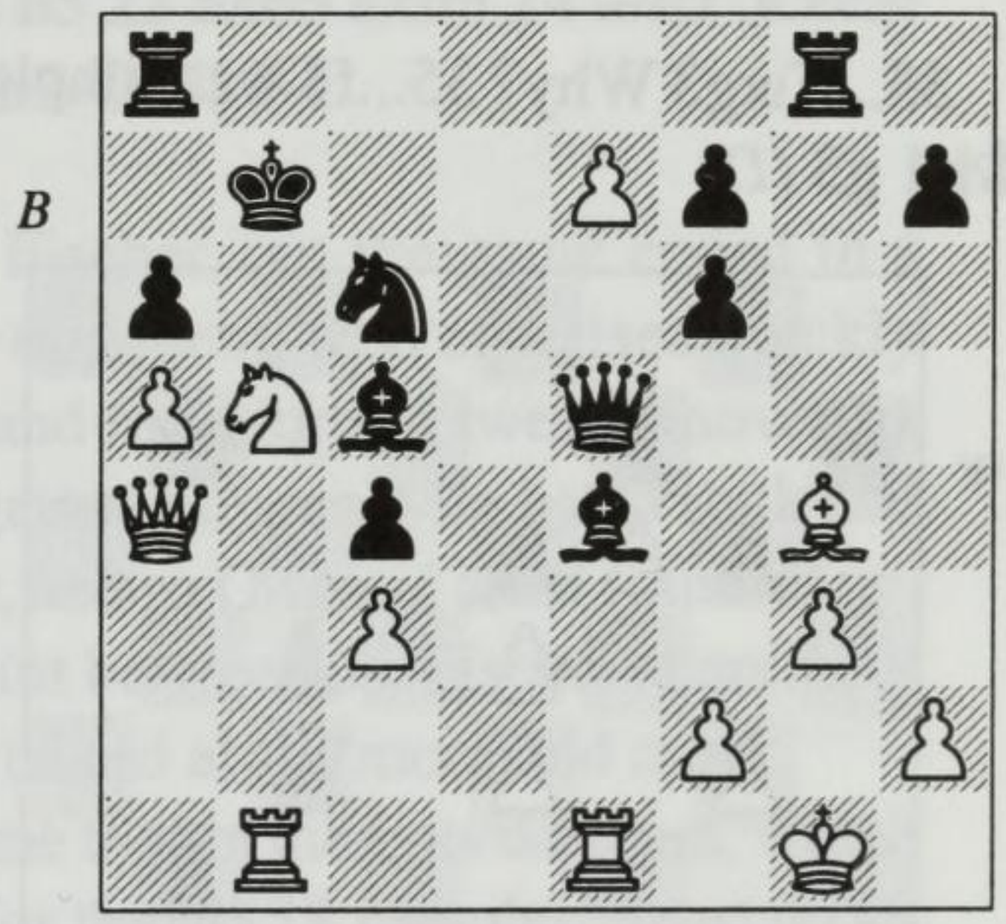
I don't think that it was this that so affected play, but there were very few draws, at any rate quiet ones. Indeed the draw which everyone had predicted between Keres and Tal only came after I succeeded in escaping from my opponent's highly unpleasant grip.

Then, in the seventh round, came a game which I enjoyed, as did the spectators, and even, it would seem, my co-author Keller. I will give it without notes, since the variations left behind the scenes are numerous and complicated.



**Tal – Keller**
*Zurich, 1959*

**14 dxe6 bxc3 15 ♘d4 ♖g8 16 ♕a4+ ♔d8 17 g3 ♗d5 18 ♖fd1 ♔c8 19 bxc3 ♗c5 20 e7 ♘c6 21 ♗g4+ ♔b7 22 ♘b5 ♕e5 23 ♖e1 ♗e4 24 ♖ab1** *(D)*



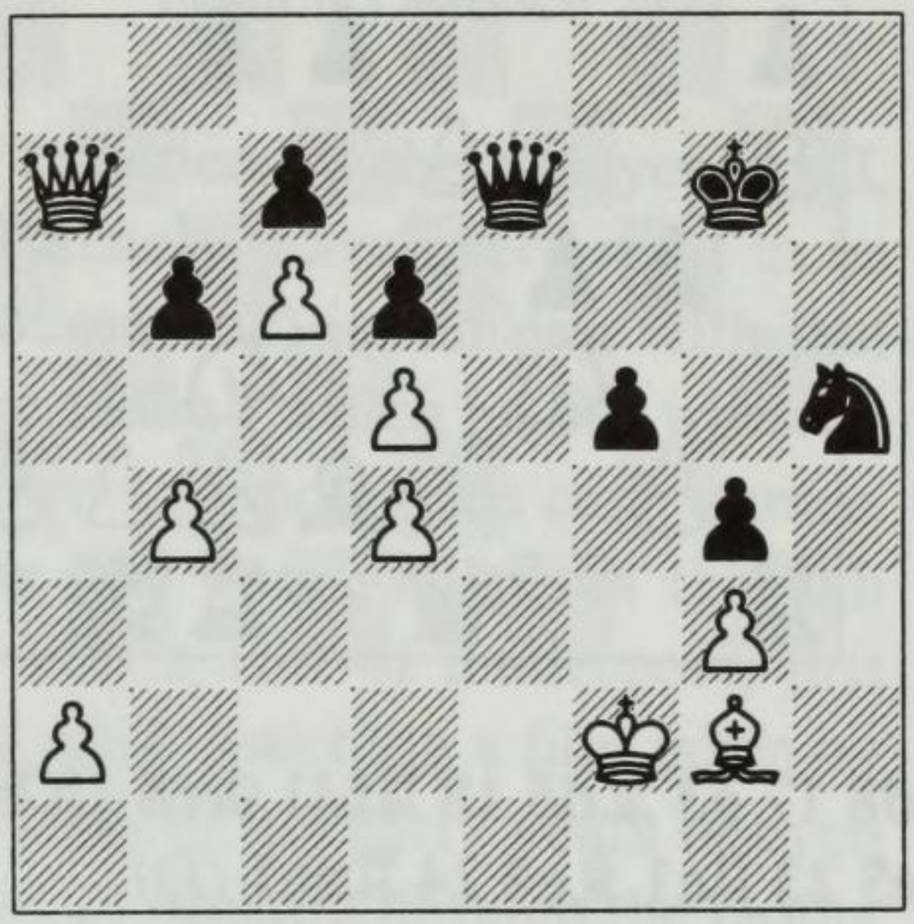
**24...♖xg4 25 ♖xe4 ♕xe4 26 ♘d6+ ♔c7 27 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 28 ♕d1 ♖e5 29 ♖b7+ ♔xb7 30 ♕d7+ ♔b8 31 e8♕+ ♖xe8 32 ♕xe8+ ♔b7 33 ♕d7+ ♔b8 34 ♕xc6 1-0**

JOURNALIST. *Why did you never annotate it, and instead called upon Grandmaster Shamkovich, master Panov and others to do this?*

CHESS PLAYER. Well, you see, I did not want to give a faulty analysis, and to work through it to the end is, I'm afraid, hardly possible.

So, after 11 rounds I had 9½ points, and it seemed that the battle for first place was decided, since my closest pursuers were some one and a half points behind, and I felt that I was playing well. Perhaps it was this that caused me, in a winning position against Barcza in the 12th round, to play, for the umpteenth time, 'brilliantly' – and for the umpteenth time I was punished. My opponent found a simple refutation of the piece sacrifice, and I had to force a draw.

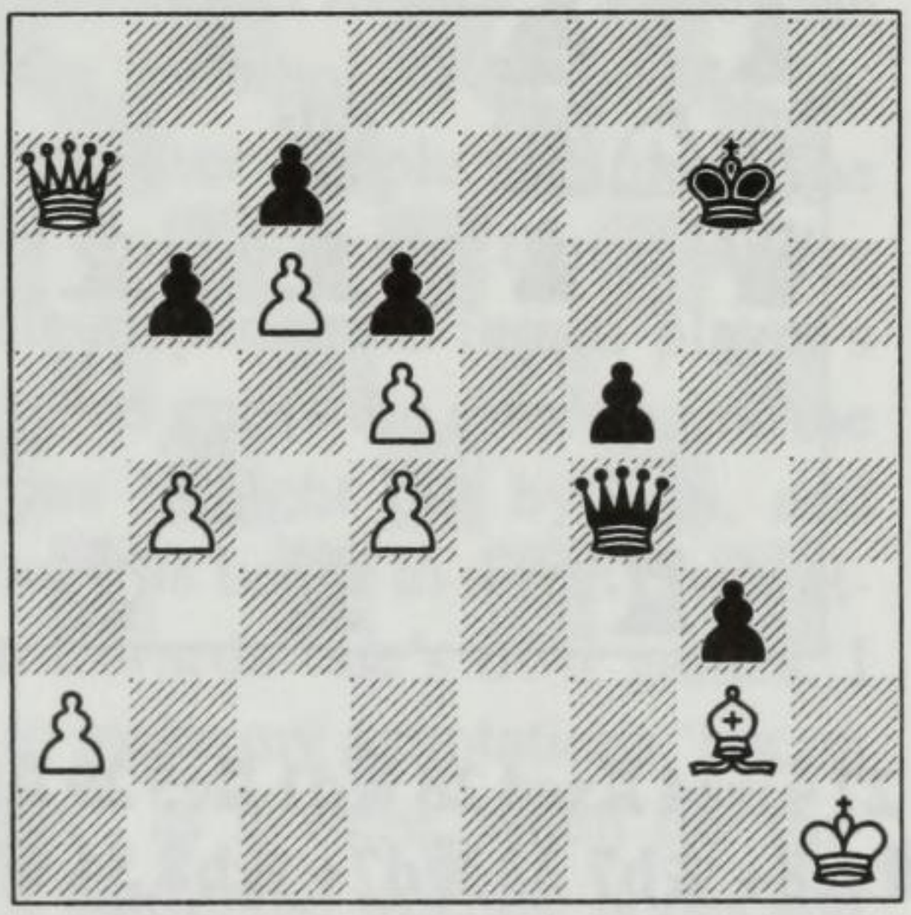
*B*



**Barcza – Tal**
*Zurich, 1959*

**35...♘xg3** Why? 35...f4 was simple enough. **36 ♔xg3 ♕e3+ 37 ♔h2 ♕f4+ 38 ♔h1 g3** *(D)*

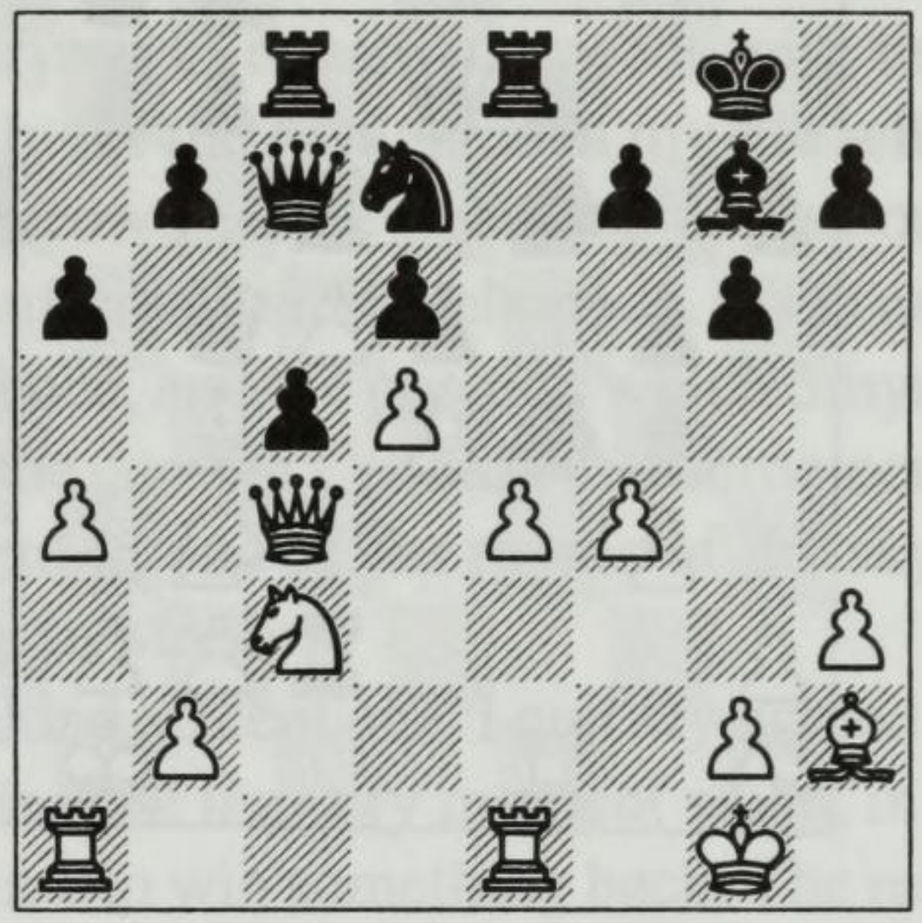
*W*



**39 ♕a6 ♕h6+ 40 ♔g1 ♕e3+ 41 ♔h1 ♕h6+ ½-½**

The bungling of this game had its effect, and the following day I lost without putting up any great resistance as White against Gligorić, who disclosed a very good way of handling his favourite Ruy Lopez.

Immediately they were all alongside me: Gligorić, Keres, and also Fischer, whom I had to play at the finish. Nevertheless, before the last round I had maintained a lead of half a point over Gligorić, and one point over Keres and Fischer. On the previous day the American grandmaster had played recklessly against Keller, and the Swiss player had won, while as Black I had defeated Donner in the then rarely-played system 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5:



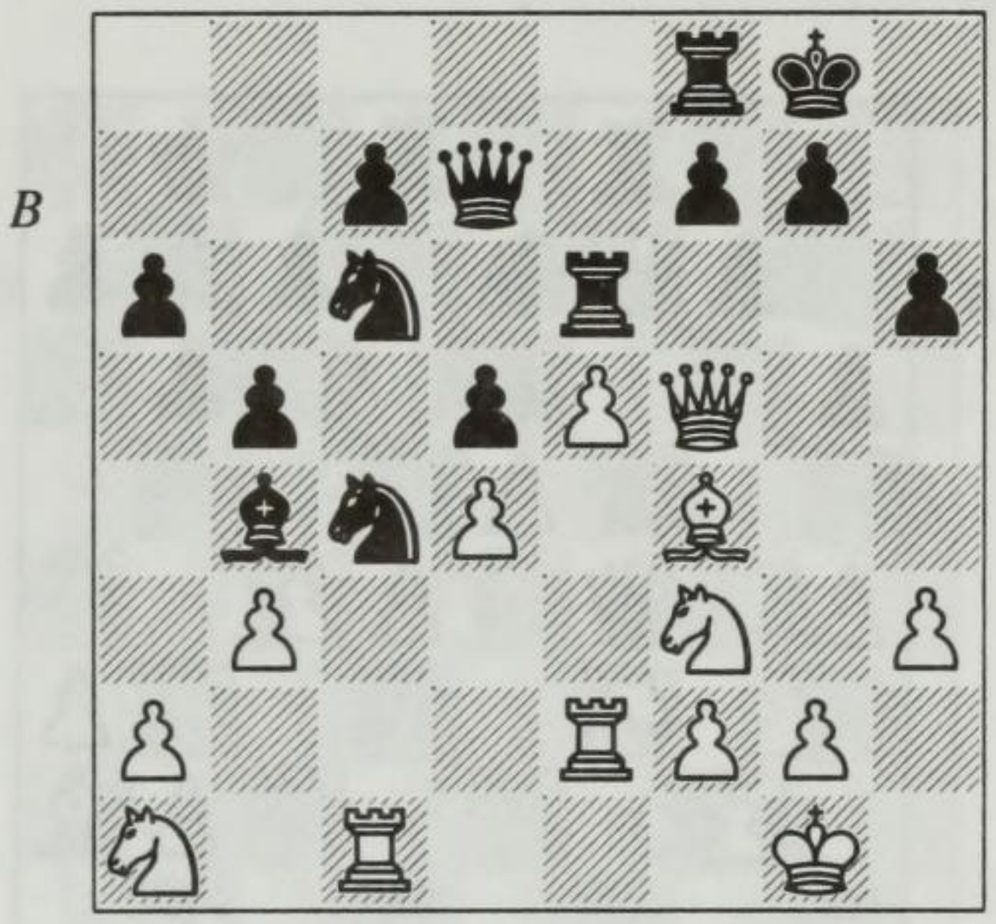
**Donner – Tal**
*Zurich, 1959*

**19...♕b6! 20 ♖ab1 ♕b4 21 ♕f1 c4 22 ♖e2 b5 23 axb5 axb5 24 ♔h1 ♗xc3! 25 bxc3 ♕xc3 26 ♖xb5 ♕d3 27 ♕e1 c3 28 ♖b1 ♘c5! 0-1**

In the last round, only a win could satisfy Fischer, but the game ended in a draw, with, I would say, a moral victory to my opponent, who equalised quickly as Black. Now only Gligorić could catch me, and for a further twenty moves he tried to win an ending with rook and bishop against Kupper, who had a rook and knight. Even so, this game also ended in a draw, and so Gligorić and I finished up, as in the Interzonal Tournament, with half a point between us. Fischer shared 3rd and 4th places with Keres, and he began to be talked about more and more.

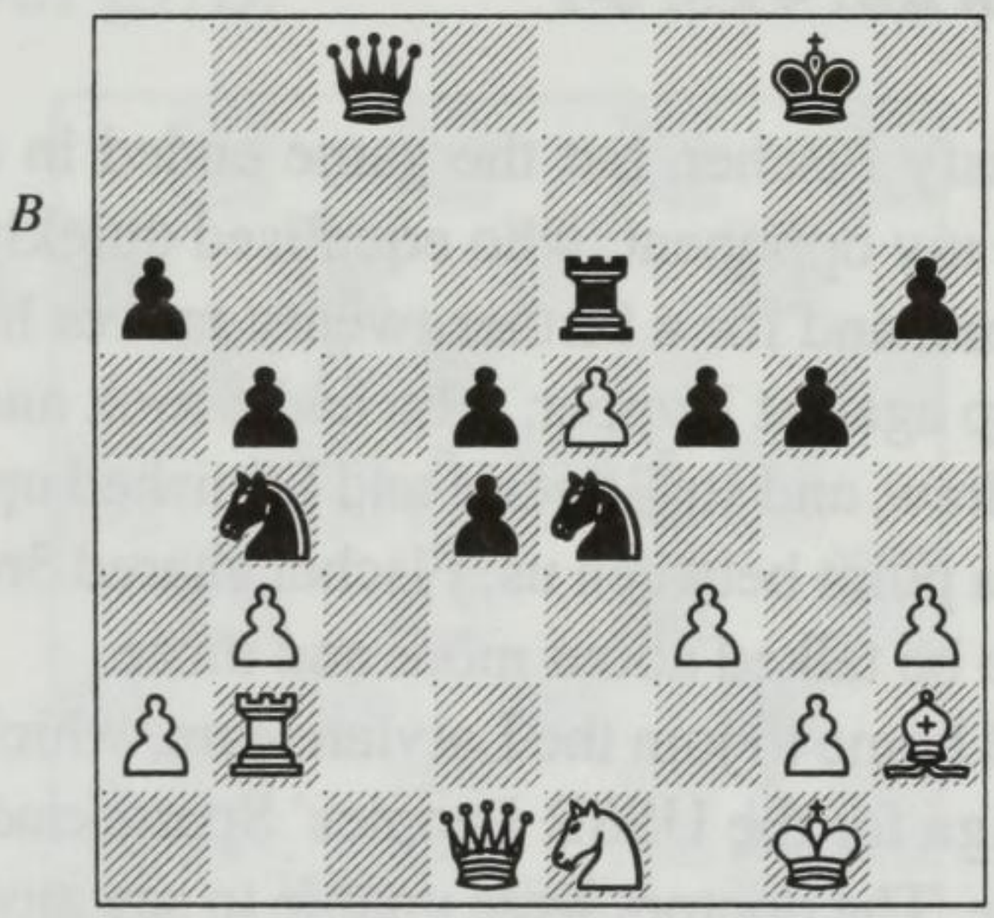
So, everything seemed fine. We returned home to join the Latvian team, which was preparing somewhere by the sea in Riga for the USSR Peoples' Spartakiad, when I had my first attack of kidney trouble. The doctors were unable to say anything definite immediately, but suggested that in any case I shouldn't play in the Spartakiad. I realised that it would not be easy for me there on top board against Botvinnik, Spassky, Geller, Keres, Boleslavsky and others, but I decided that my participation would to some extent help the team. Although I took last place (for the first time in my life!) in the team leaders' tournament, scoring 2½ out of 8, I nevertheless succeeded in saving a few points for our team in analysis, so that the lads considered that I had been justified in playing.

I realised, as early as the preliminary group, that I could not hope for much. I had only just sacrificed a knight on g7 against Keres, when I had a recurrence of the attack, and straight away the game ceased to be of interest. The following day exactly the same happened, and I am still sorry about this game: it could have been one of my best. Here is the second half of it, Spassky was White.



**Spassky – Tal**
*USSR Spartakiad, Moscow 1959*

**23...f6! 24 ♕g4 f5! 25 ♕h5 ♘d6! 26 ♘c2 ♘e4 27 ♘xb4 ♘xb4 28 ♘e1 c5! 29 ♖b2 cxd4 30 ♕d1 g5 31 ♗h2 ♖c8 32 ♖xc8+ ♕xc8 33 f3** *(D)*



**33...♕c3** Black wins easily after 33...♘c3, and if 34 ♕xd4 then 34...♘cxa2, when there is no defence against 35...♕c3. **34 fxe4 ♕xb2?** Now Black loses his advantage; he would still have had the better chances after 34...dxe4, e.g. 35 ♖f2 ♘d5! 36 ♖c2 ♕e3+ 37 ♔h1 ♘c3 38 ♕a1 ♘e2. **35 exf5 ♖c6 36 ♗g3 d3?** Black could still have drawn by 36...♘c2 37 ♕h5 ♘xe1 38 ♗xe1 ♕c1! **37 ♕h5 d2 38 ♕e8+ ♔g7 39 ♕e7+ ♔h8 40 f6 dxe1♕+ 41 ♗xe1 1-0**

JOURNALIST. *Can you name for us your best game?*
CHESS PLAYER. As long as I am alive – no.

JOURNALIST. *I recall that 10 years ago, you said that you were intending to play it every time you sat down at the board.*

CHESS PLAYER. Did I? Well, in principle that's true. Only, nowadays I would say: 'today I may play my best game', and not 'I must play'. After these encounters I restrained my appetite for chess, trying to equate my needs with my possibilities. Nevertheless, I prepared carefully for the first game in my life with Botvinnik. However, instead of him, the Moscow reserve Vasiukov turned out and, as a result of this, it was Smyslov who suffered 'on the rebound'. I was expecting Botvinnik to play the Caro-Kann Defence, and the position which Smyslov and I were to reach in the second cycle of the coming Candidates Tournament in Yugoslavia was already standing on a board in one of the rooms of the skyscraper 'Ukraine' hotel, during the Spartakiad in Moscow.

In all the remaining games from the Spartakiad, except one, I quickly agreed a draw, but I lost to my old 'enemy' Nezhmetdinov at the very moment when, in a slightly better position, I decided that it was time to win something back. The rest is understandable,

After the Spartakiad in Moscow, the usual open lightning championship of the city took place for the prize donated by the newspaper *Vechernaya Moskva*. I already had experience of lightning tournaments and readily played in them, not unsuccessfully. On this occasion, in the heat of the battle – and a tournament of five-minute games with 24 participants lasts for about 6 hours – I had a new attack. After losing some ten games, and dissipating the whole of my plus score, I took a flight to Riga, and within 2 hours was already in one of the clinics there. The next morning they operated on me, and took out ... my appendix. The most amusing thing is that, for several years after this, my attacks of kidney trouble ceased (!), and I found out that the first operation had been ineffective only when I had my diseased kidney removed.

I was allowed 10 days to recover, not by my doctors, but by the International Chess Federation: the Candidates Tournament in Yugoslavia was about to start. My friends arranged for my luggage to be taken to the airport, and then Grandmaster Averbakh (at first he was my only second; Koblents arrived somewhat later) and I, together with Keres, Petrosian, Smyslov and their seconds, set off for Bled.

I was not much troubled by the effects of the operation, apart from in a purely mechanical sense; during a game I did not feel inclined to stroll about, and I was unable to walk quickly. I was able to devote myself to the battle, and in round one

the first game of my life against Smyslov was adjourned in a position that I considered drawn, despite the fact that I was the exchange down. Then I won against Gligorić, and after this I played Keres, not even suspecting that the result of this meeting could be of great significance. Who thought that it was the future winners who were playing?

In this encounter I at first succeeded in outwitting my formidable opponent in tactical complications, but then, rejecting the simple in favour of the complex, I first of all gave up my advantage, and then lost the game.

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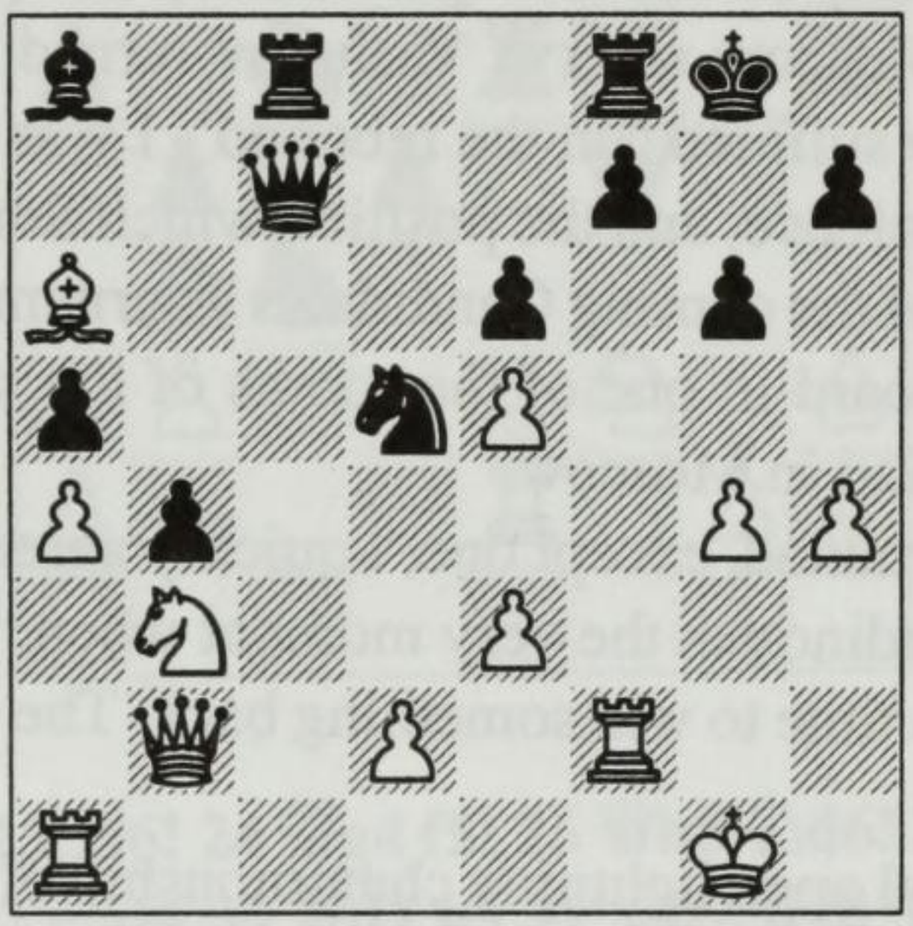


**Keres – Tal**

*Candidates Tournament, Bled 1959*

**28...♘xe3!** Now two black pieces are *en prise,* but the capture of either of them gives Black a decisive attack. **29 ♖c1 ♕e7! 30 dxe3 ♕xh4 31 ♔f1 ♕h3+ 32 ♔e2 ♕xg4+ 33 ♔d2 ♖fd8+ 34 ♘d4 ♕g3 35 ♖f4 ♖xc1?** Correct was 35...♕g2+ 36 ♗e2 ♕d5, winning a fourth pawn for the knight, and keeping the initiative. **36 ♕xc1 ♕g2+ 37 ♗e2 ♕d5 38 ♕c7! ♖d7 39 ♕c4 ♔g7?** This unexpectedly loses the game, whereas 39...h5! 40 ♕c8+ ♖d8 would evidently have drawn. **40 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 41 ♗b5 ♖c7 42 e4**, and White won the ending 22 moves later.

Taking into account the loss of my adjourned game against Smyslov, my tournament position – one point out of three – was not very prepossessing, especially since my failure against Keres had been rather annoying.

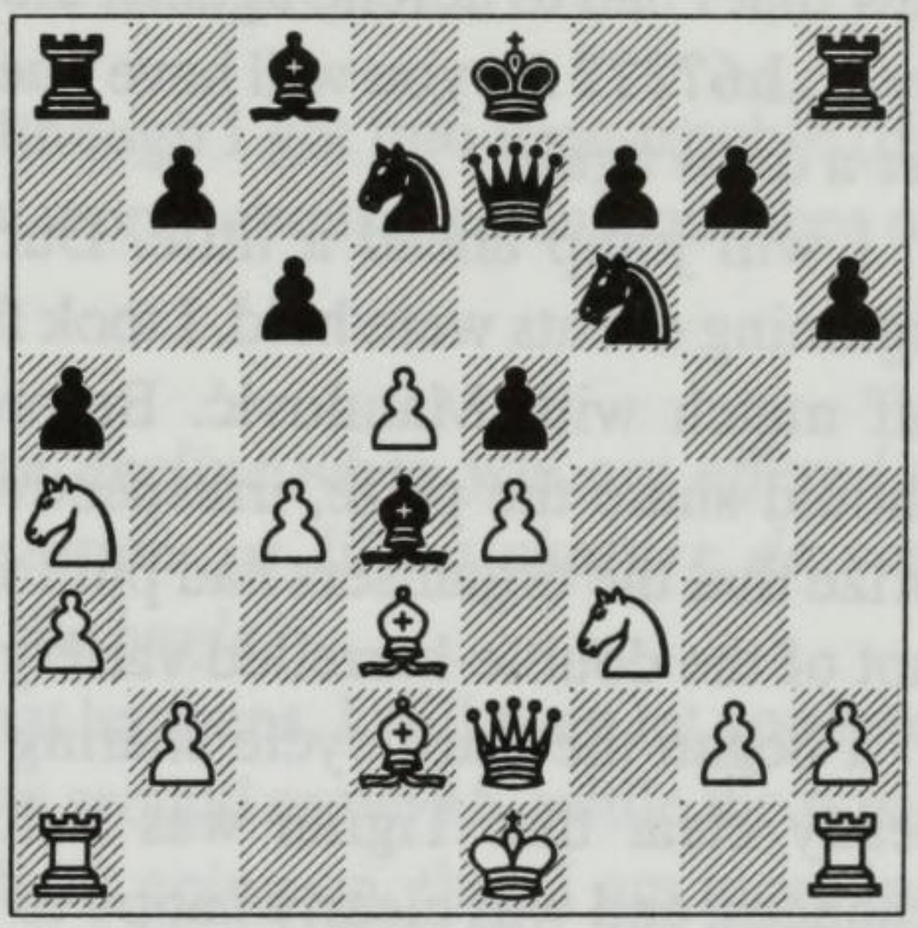
Our game had apparently so exhausted Keres that the following day he played passively and lost against Petrosian, who thus became the leader. As White against me, Petrosian did not force matters, and after defeating the remaining foreign contestants, I finished the first cycle amongst the leaders.

The second cycle went roughly the same way, except that, in addition, I succeeded in winning a game against Smyslov that was important for my frame of mind. As you will recall, it was here that exploded the mine intended for Botvinnik

in the USSR Peoples' Spartakiad. However, the attack itself, and the sacrifices in this game – which won the brilliancy prize – were pure improvisation.

The game provoked a great deal of interest (it is given here), and every morning for at least three weeks the leader of our delegation, Grandmaster Ragozin, would exchange variations with the well-known Yugoslav journalist, master Vuković. Vuković would come up with a refutation of the combination, and Ragozin, the next day, would respond with an improvement for the attack. In the end they came to the conclusion that White had sufficient pressure for the piece.

Such play so appealed to me, that I decided: everything is possible! A couple of days later, in my game with Keres I suddenly saw a fantastic possibility of sacrificing two pieces: a knight on b6, and a bishop on d6. I carried out the plan, ran up against a simple refutation, and continued to resist, prompted only by emotion, since I could have resigned much earlier.




**Tal – Keres**
*Candidates Tournament, Bled 1959*

**15 ♘xd4?** 15 ♗e3 would have maintained a good position. **15...exd4 16 ♗f4 ♘e5 17 ♘b6 ♗g4! 18 ♕c2 ♘xd3+ 19 ♕xd3 ♖a6 20 0-0?** It was not yet too late to retreat by 20 ♘a4. **20...♖xb6 21 ♗d6 ♕xd6 22 e5 ♕e7!** I had overlooked this simple reply: now on 23 exf6 there follows 23...♕e3+, with the exchange of queens. White subsequently won back only one of his pieces, which, of course, was not enough.

However, my optimism remained high, since I considered that I had been unfairly punished for an original idea. After a further three wins in a row, it was clear after the end of the second cycle that if nothing extraordinary happened then either Keres or I would be the winner. The tournament moved on to Zagreb, but before this, a lightning event was held in Bled. I succeeded in winning it, but what sticks in my mind is something else: a unique oversight. I cannot recall the exact position, but the mechanism of the blunder was as follows:

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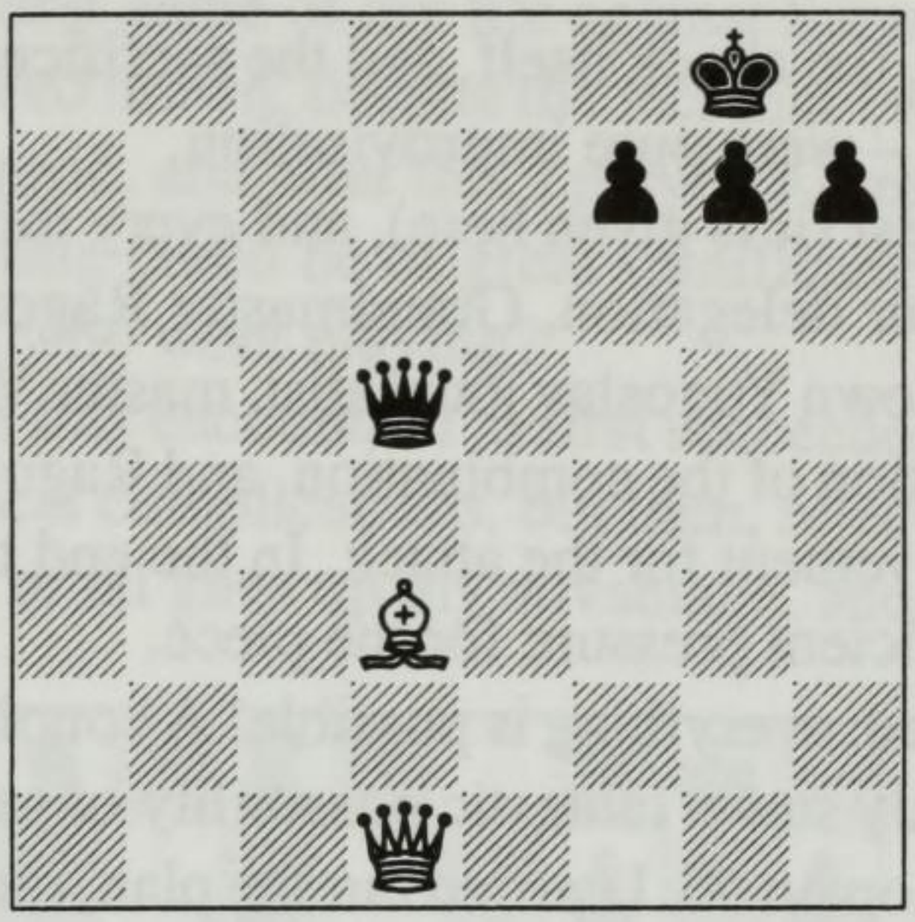


**Averbakh – Tal**
*Bled Lightning*

It was Black to move. Averbakh offered me a draw, but I decided to play on. I saw that I had to defend against the threat of 2 ♗xh7+ and 3 ♕xd5. So I defended by **1...h6????** As you will have guessed, Averbakh replied **2 ♗h7+**, and didn't offer a draw again.

I will jump ahead a little. During the Candidates Tournament, two further lightning events were held. I took first place in both of them – in one, after a play-off match with Matulović. Before the play-off Matulović demanded that we should share the prize, irrespective of the result. I did not object, although the prize that the organisers had put forward was a single air-rifle. In addition. it was not of the double-barrelled variety.

I began the third cycle sharing 2nd-3rd places with Petrosian, but it was already clear that Tigran was fading a little. As usual, he underestimated his chances, and was clearly happy to fight for a place not higher than an honourable third.

From this cycle I must again recall in particular the games with Smyslov and Keres (the encounter with Fischer is given here). In the first of these my opponent was obviously intent on gaining his revenge for the game from the second cycle, and besides, it was clear that the players from the older generation who were fighting for the crown did not especially want to allow a young upstart into their midst.

Up to a certain point Smyslov played the game brilliantly and completely outplayed me, while in addition I had only 2-3 minutes left for some 15 moves. I had nothing to lose, there was no time for hesitation, and I attempted only to complicate my opponent's task in any way possible. Then, with my flag horizontal, and a further four moves still to make, Smyslov ran into almost the only 'swindle' I had managed to think up. As I later found out, he had seen my rook sacrifice on g1, but not on h1.

Smyslov is normally imperturbable at the board, but here, after my 39th move ...♖h1+, his face changed, and after thinking for some three minutes, he made his reply and slammed his clock with furious force. Some of the pieces fell over, but, contrary to my normal practice, I first gave check with my rook on g1, pressed my clock, and only then began to restore order on the board. White could no longer escape from perpetual check.

On the same day, Keres blundered in his game with Fischer, and I drew level with Paul Petrovich, and then after the next round, when I won against Gligorić, I went into the lead for the first time.

The next game, with Keres, thus took on an even greater significance. Before going in for some forced complications my opponent offered me a draw. I recalled the two games I had already lost to him in the tournament, and besides, I was playing Black, and was leading him by half a point. Thus a draw was desirable on all accounts, except one: the position was highly interesting and I did not want to part with it.

The subsequent play was very lively, and although I got into time-trouble (by the way, when I am in form, I even now do not worry about the consequences of time-trouble), I managed to win.

JOURNALIST. *In the majority of cases you decline when you are offered a draw. Do you take time to consider the suggestion, or, like a charger, do you straight away 'snort' defiance at the sound of the bugle?*

CHESS PLAYER. Alas, that is normally what happens. I will even let you into a small 'trade secret'. When I am offered a draw around move 15, while the position is still 'flavourless', and there is no real fight going on, then I am more inclined to agree, but later I more often decline.

So, the third cycle went highly successfully for me: apart from the draw with Smyslov I shared the point only with Petrosian, and won the rest of my games. I am now prepared to admit that in the 3rd and 4th cycles Petrosian and I did not really play. This was a negative reaction to the practically unanimous comments in the press after our game from the second cycle. We had played seriously but then read the following opinion, which was not exactly complimentary to us:

'Of course, Tal and Petrosian are friends; there is nothing one can do about it, all their games finish in a draw'. This angered us, and we decided: 'Right, we'll show them how to really draw without a fight!' Over our next game we spent a total of 5 minutes, not more.

I set off for the fourth cycle in Belgrade with a lead of 1½ points. Taking into account the fact that in my two most important games, with Smyslov and Keres, I had White, I assumed that this lead should suffice.

However, I am unable to win a tournament without any adventures. They began with the game against Smyslov, where I needlessly threw myself into the attack, ran up against an excellent defence, then half-blundered, half-sacrificed a piece, and only in the time-scramble managed to win after a blunder by my opponent on the 40th move.

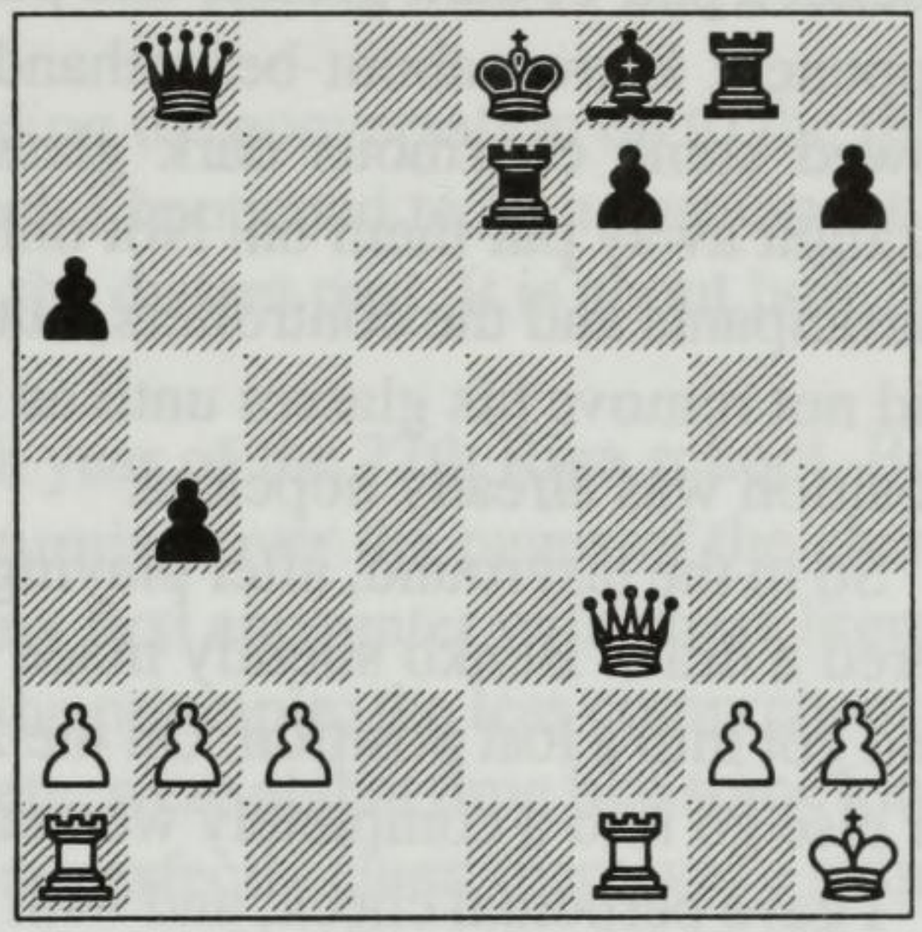
In the following round Smyslov was this time 'on my side', and defeated Keres, and since I won against Gligorić, I was leading by 2½ points with five rounds to go. I had only to draw with my closest pursuer Keres, who at that moment was already resigned to taking second place, and victory was in the bag. I realised this perfectly well, but as White nevertheless decided to attempt, if possible, to make the score in our individual match 2-2. Here I found out, for the first time in my life, that to play simultaneously for two results (no one plays deliberately for a loss, as far as I am aware) is not possible. I began with the intention of playing a complicated positional five-hour game, but then a couple of times I had a certain change of heart, and Keres very keenly sensed this indecision on my part. From around move 15, he himself began playing for a win. From inertia I avoided exchanges on a couple of moves, and when I made up my mind to play only for a draw, it proved to be too late. This win gained Keres the prize for the 'Best Game'.

Two rounds later, the distance between us had narrowed to one point, and in the penultimate round I had to play the quite revitalised Fischer, who up till then had capitulated in all our three games. Afterwards I was told that Bobby had sworn in public to at least exact his revenge at the finish, so as to have the last word.

In preparing for the game we decided that I should play the normal Sicilian Defence with ...d6 and ...a6, and as regards the sacrifice of White's e-pawn, we carelessly waved our hands and said 'Oh, take it!' So I took it, although I was unprepared, subsequently made a couple of mistakes, and felt myself to be on the very, very edge of the abyss. Especially since Fischer was playing very keenly and accurately, while Keres, 'scenting blood', had as Black set himself to do everything he could to crush Gligorić. In short, everything pointed to the fact that the question of first place would be decided in the last round, or even after it.

However Fischer, not wishing to remain a pawn down for long, hastened to re-establish material equality, and in doing so lost a part of his advantage. On the 18th move I was faced with a choice: I could either go into a slightly inferior ending, or else I could accept a piece sacrifice, thereby subjecting myself to a very strong attack. I could not see a forced mate, it is true, but perhaps only because I wasn't looking for one. If I had been playing White, I would have considered the attack to be decisive.

Nevertheless, I chose the second path, and within three moves the following famous position was reached.



**Fischer – Tal**
*Candidates Tournament, Bled 1959*

It is famous, because it was here that a widely-known psychological duel took place between us.

Every player has his own habit: one will first make his move and then write it down, while another will do things the other way round. Incidentally, in recent years Fischer has actively objected to this 'other way round', expressing the opinion that a scoresheet is not a black-board for writing down exercises. However, in our game Fischer first wrote down the move 22 ♖ae1!, without doubt the strongest, and wrote it not in his usual English notation but in European, almost Russian! Then he not very deftly pushed the scoresheet towards me. 'He's asking for an endorsement', I thought to myself, but how was I to react? To frown was impossible, if I smiled he would suspect 'trickery', and so I did the natural thing. I got up and began to calmly walk up and down the stage. I met Petrosian, made some joke to him, and he replied. The 15-year-old Fischer, who was essentially still only a large child, sat with a confused expression on his face, looking first at the front row of the spectators where his second was sitting, and then at me.

Then he wrote down another move: **22 ♕c6+?**, and after **22...♖d7 23 ♖ae1+ ♗e7 24 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 25 ♕e6+ ♔f8! 26 ♕xd7 ♕d6** I held on to my extra piece and adjourned the game in a won position. When I later asked Fischer why he hadn't played 22 ♖ae1, he replied: 'Well, you laughed when I wrote it down!'

After this, my second made me give my word to offer a draw in the last round on move 12. At that time my score against Benko was 5-0, and the idea that he might refuse the draw somehow never occurred to me.

JOURNALIST. *Especially after the performance with the glasses?*

CHESS PLAYER. Yes, of course! In the third cycle, when we sat down at the board Benko, who had earlier suspected me of hypnotising him, took out of his pocket a pair of dark glasses and put them on. This 'innovation', like any that the opponent knows about beforehand, was met by a 'counter-stroke'. I had borrowed some enormous dark glasses from Petrosian, and following Benko I straight away put them on. Not only the spectators laughed, as well as the other participants and the controllers, but also Benko himself. Unlike me, however, he did not remove his glasses until as late as the twentieth move, by which time his position was already hopeless.

So in the last round, after playing g4 on my 12th move, I kept my word and offered a draw. Benko silently made an answering move, very quickly blundered, and got into a lost position. On the 21st move I could either give perpetual check, or else go into a completely won ending with two extra pawns.

I gave perpetual check, and with the quick temper of youth explained my decision to the journalists as follows: 'When I want to win against Benko, I win; when I want to draw – I draw'. Today I can only request indulgence, taking into account the fact that I was then only 22 years old, but I should say that from the psychological point of view it would have been easier for Benko if I had won that game ...

Only after this, on the initiative of the journalists, did I begin thinking about the match with Botvinnik.

Before the match there was one more tournament: the first International Tournament in Riga, held under the slogan 'The Baltic is the sea of friendship'.

JOURNALIST. *But was it sensible for you to play in it? After all, there was less than six months to go before the match.*

CHESS PLAYER. In the first place, it would have been rather awkward for me to decline to take part in Riga. Secondly, Koblents and I decided that I should try to 'cover up' in the opening, especially as Black against 1 d4. In addition, Koblents set me a purely 'academic' task: to play somewhat passively in the opening, so as to become accustomed to defending.

This was the general aim. We did not set a goal as far as the result was concerned, and it is doubtful whether this would have helped, for the winners, Spassky and Mikenas, played very, very well. A certain consolation was provided by the prize for the best attack in the tournament (this game with Johannessen is given here) and my result in the traditional lightning tournament: 16½ out of 17.

Of course, I am only joking. Seriously speaking we were happy with the creative results of the tournament as one of the steps in our preparations for the match.

I spent the last few days of the year in Vilnius, and I could not decline an invitation from our Lithuanian neighbours to give a simultaneous display, where I was confronted by almost entirely first category players. The display concluded with an honourable result for me: +19 −1 =6.

Then the year 1960 arrived, but before leading the conversation on to the two matches for the World Championship, in which I happened to be a participant, I should like to tell you about an episode from the distant past. It is about how M. Tal was sent out of the class.

Autumn 1945: A singing lesson for the 5th year of the 77th Riga school. Behind one of the desks, two boys are intently turning over the pages of the chess bulletin *14th USSR Championship* (this was my first encounter with chess literature). The 'studying' proceeded according to the principle: the less comprehensible, the better, since symbols such as e4, ♘f5 etc. were at that time like some kind of hieroglyphics to me. However, one thing was perfectly clear: there was a string of 'ones' against the name of Botvinnik. Carried away by what we were doing, we made perhaps the first blunder of our chess careers: we 'overlooked' a question by the teacher. The retribution was swift and severe.

All my generation – lads who had first learned chess in the immediate post-war years – had their idol. He was, of course, Mikhail Moiseyevich Botvinnik. Many were supporters of Keres, many wished Smyslov success, but they, and others, admired the first Soviet World Champion.

In 1948 I also achieved some success in the field of chess – I reached fourth category rating. It is very possible that I played a little worse then than I do now, but my self-importance was no less. When, in May, Botvinnik was proclaimed World Champion, I was truly delighted, and yet somewhere inside of me there was a slight doubt: how could this be, after all he had never played me?!

Years passed. Schoolboys became students, fourth category players become candidate masters, but the idol remained the same. I must repeat that until the last round of the 1959 Candidates Tournament, the idea that I would at some time be playing a match for the World Championship with Botvinnik never entered my head. Now the moment had arrived.

Game 21

**Tal – Panno**

*Portorož Interzonal 1958*

Ruy Lopez

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **e5** | **3** | **♗b5** | **a6** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **♘c6** | **4** | **♗a4** | **♘f6** |
| | | | **5** | **0-0** | **♗e7** |
| | | | **6** | **♖e1** | **b5** |
| | | | **7** | **♗b3** | **d6** |
| | | | **8** | **c3** | **0-0** |
| | | | **9** | **h3** | **♘d7** |

**10 d4 ♘b6**

This opening system has been developed by Bulgarian players. Black's idea is to create counterplay immediately on the queenside. After the natural 11 ♘bd2 exd4 12 cxd4 d5 Black has no difficulties. The exchange in the centre 11 dxe5 ♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 dxe5 13 ♕h5 gets White nowhere after 13...♕d6 (Fischer-Tal, Portorož 1958).

**11 ♗e3 exd4**

White was planning, after exchanges on e5 and b6, to seize the important central square d5. Black's move is in accordance with the strategic plan mentioned above.

**12 cxd4 ♘a5**

This is stronger than 12...d5 (Tal-Antoshin, 24th USSR Championship). After 13 ♘c3 dxe4 14 ♘xe4 White held the initiative.

**13 ♗c2 c5**

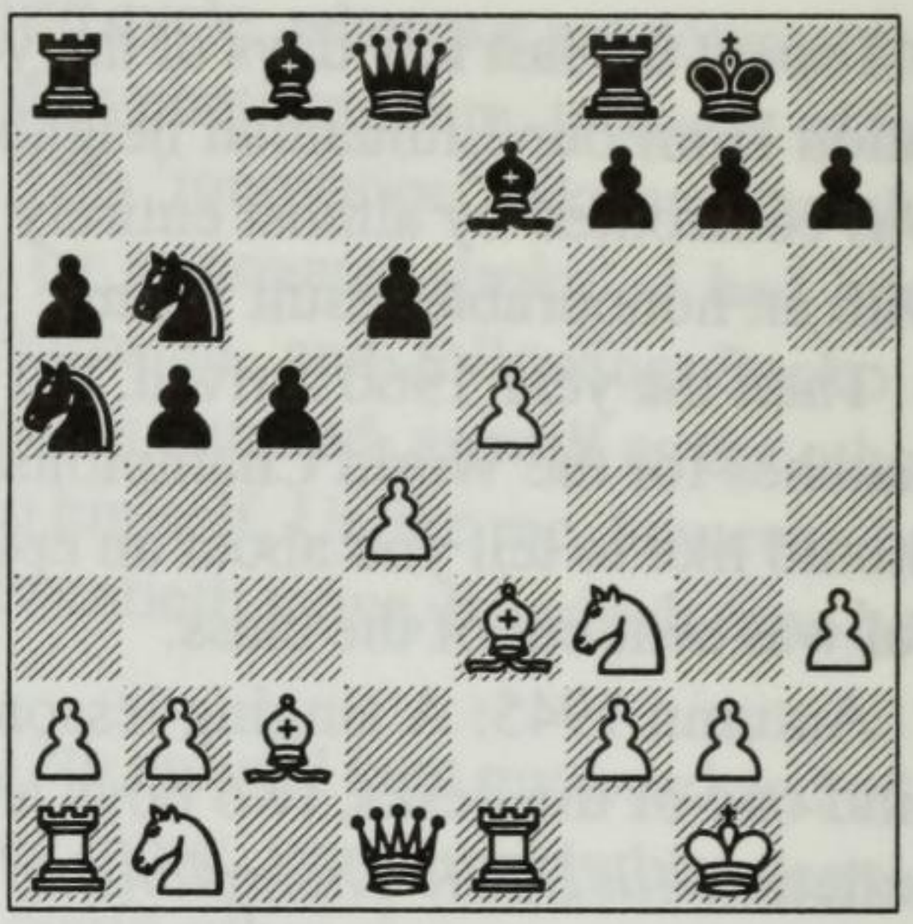
**14 e5!** *(D)*

Evidently the only move which enables White to hinder his opponent's plans. After both 14 ♘c3 ♘ac4 15 ♗c1 cxd4 16 ♘xd4 ♗f6 and also 14 dxc5 dxc5 15 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 16 b4 ♘b7 (or 16...♘ac4) Black's position is preferable.

The move in the game caused Black to sink into thought. An hour later there followed:

**14 ... dxe5!**

Panno avoids the various traps. Tempting was 14...♘ac4 15 exd6 ♕xd6 but then White has the strong reply 16 ♗g5! Similarly, after 14...cxd4 15



*B*

♗xd4 the black knights are removed from the main theatre of events.

**15 ♘xe5 ♘bc4**

**16 ♕d3**

White is not satisfied with a draw: 16 ♕h5 g6 17 ♘xg6 fxg6 18 ♗xg6 hxg6 19 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 and 20 ♗h6 ♖g8 21 ♕h5 fails to 21...♕e8. Interesting complications now develop.

**16 ... f5**

If 16...g6, then 17 ♗h6 ♖e8 18 ♕f3 or 18 ♘xf7. It would appear that in view of the threats of 17...♘xe3, 17...♘xb2 and 17...♘xe5 White's game is inferior, but he has at his disposal an interesting move.

**17 ♗b3! f4**

17...♗e6 loses a pawn to 18 dxc5.

**18 ♗d2 ♘xb3!**

Black would have a difficult position after 18...♗f5 19 ♗xa5 ♕xa5 20 ♕c3 ♕xc3 21 ♘xc3 cxd4 22 ♘xc4 bxc4 23 ♗xc4+ ♔h8 24 ♖xe7, when he is a pawn down. Now it would appear that White can play simply 19 ♕xb3 with the threats of 20 ♘xc4 and 20 ♘c6.

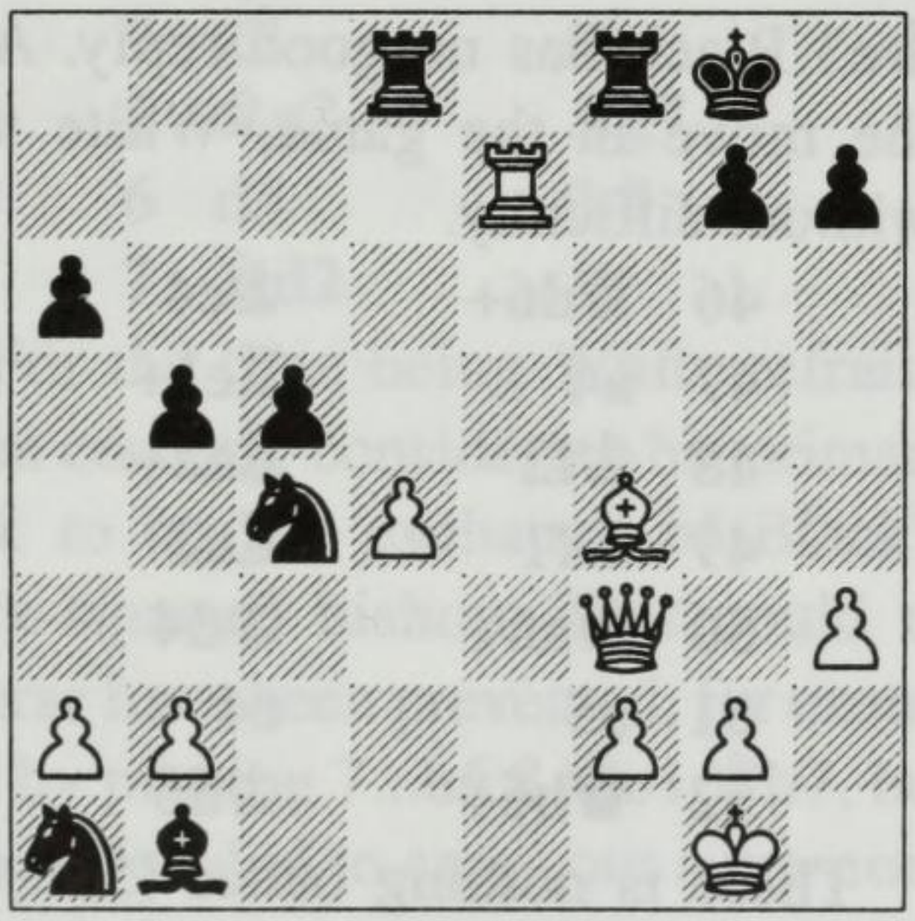
**19 ♘c6!?**

It turns out that after 19 ♕xb3 ♗f6 20 ♘xc4 bxc4 21 ♕xc4+ ♔h8 White experiences considerable difficulties. 20 ♘a3 appears strong, but this move is also not especially unpleasant for Black. White decides on a complicated combination, the consequences of which were difficult to assess.

**19 ... ♘xa1**
**20 ♘xd8 ♗f5**

On 20...♗xd8 White could not continue 21 dxc5 because of 21...♖a7 when the black pieces become active. However, by 21 b3 White would win the knight on a1.

**21 ♕f3 ♖axd8**
**22 ♖xe7 ♗xb1**
**23 ♗xf4** *(D)*



*B*

This is the position that White had been aiming for. The point is that the knight on a1 is out of play, the opposite-coloured bishops assist White in his attack against g7, and the knight on c4 can be driven away. Besides, in some cases he can capture the pawn on c5. Bad is 23...cxd4 24 b3 d3?, in view of 25 ♕g4.

**23 ... ♖xd4**
**24 ♕g4!**

As later becomes clear, this is much stronger than 24 ♕g3.

**24 ... ♗g6**
**25 ♕e6+ ♗f7**
**26 ♕f5 ♘c2**

After 26...♗g6 White is not forced to take the draw. Instead he has the following combination: 27 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 28 ♗h6+ ♔xh6 29 ♕xf8+ with 30 ♕xc5+ and 31 ♕xd4.

Black hastens to bring up his reserves.

**27 b3 ♗g6**

Besides this move, Black could have played 27...♖d1+ 28 ♔h2 ♘d2 and White is faced with a choice – whether to go in for the highly unclear complications of 29 h4 ♘f1+ 30 ♔h3 or to play simply 29 ♗xd2 ♖xd2 30 ♕xc5, when despite Black's material advantage his position is inferior since his pieces are disunited.

**28 ♖xg7+**

Here this combination does not win, since the rook on d4 is defended.

**28 ... ♔xg7**
**29 ♗h6+ ♔xh6**
**30 ♕xf8+ ♔g5**
**31 bxc4 bxc4**
**32 g3 ♗e4**
**33 h4+**

Nothing is gained by 33 f4+ ♔g6 34 g4 h6 when there are no mating threats. After the text, the natural 33...♔g6 can be answered by 34 f3

♗d5 35 g4, gaining important tempi (♕f5+ is threatened). Despite being in severe time-trouble, Panno defends splendidly.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **33** | **...** | **♔g4** |
| **34** | **♔h2** | **♗f5!** |

Mate in two moves was threatened. If the bishop retreats to d5, then White mates by 35 f3+ ♗xf3 36 ♕c8+.

| | | |
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| **35** | **♕f6** | |

By capturing the piece White could risk losing: 35 f3+ ♔xf3 36 ♕xf5+ ♔e3 (indirectly defending his knight) 37 ♕xh7 c3. Thus he is forced instead to seek new paths to continue the attack.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **35** | **...** | **h6** |
| **36** | **♕e5** | **♖e4** |
| **37** | **♕g7+** | **♔f3** |
| **38** | **♕c3+** | **♘e3** |

Although this is not bad, there was a simpler draw by 38...♔xf2 39 ♕xc2+ ♔f3 and White cannot avoid perpetual check.

| | | |
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| **39** | **♔g1** | **♗g4** |
| **40** | **fxe3** | **h5** |
| **41** | **♕e1** *(D)* | |

This last attempt to play for a win unexpectedly succeeds. After 41 ♕d2 ♖e6 the game would have been drawn.

| | | |
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| **41** | **...** | **♖xe3?** |

Fatigued by the foregoing struggle, Panno makes a mistake. 41...♖e6 would have drawn quickly, since 42 e4 gets nowhere after 42...c3. Now White has real winning chances.

| | | |
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| **42** | **♕f1+** | |

The sealed move.

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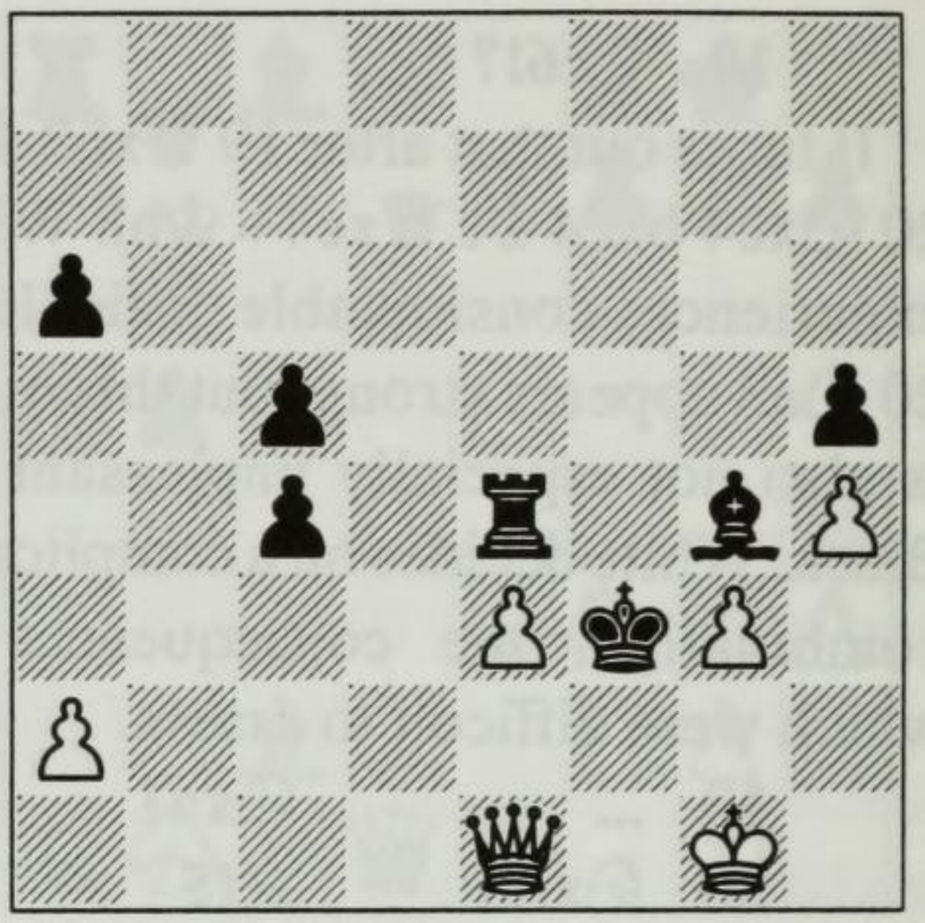
| **42** | **...** | **♔e4** |

*B*



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| **43** | **♕xc4+** | **♔f3** |
| **44** | **♕f1+** | **♔e4** |
| **45** | **♕xa6** | **♔d4** |

While analysing the adjourned position, I devoted the most attention to the continuation 45...♖xg3+ 46 ♔f2 ♖d3; after 47 ♕c4+ ♖d4 48 ♕c2+ ♔d5 49 a4 ♔c6 50 ♕g6+ ♔b7 51 ♔e3 Black has no good reply. After the move in the game, White wins without difficulty.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **46** | **♕d6+** | **♔c4** |
| **47** | **a4** | **♖e1+** |
| **48** | **♔f2** | **♖e2+** |
| **49** | **♔f1** | **♖a2** |
| **50** | **♕a6+** | **♔d4** |
| **51** | **a5** | **c4** |
| **52** | **♕b6+** | **♔d5** |

There is nothing better (52...♔d3 53 ♕b1+).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **53** | **a6** | **♖a1+** |
| **54** | **♔f2** | **c3** |
| **55** | **a7** | **c2** |
| **56** | **♕b3+** | **♔d6** |
| **57** | **♕d3+** | **1-0** |

If the king moves to the c-file or to e5, then 58 ♕c3+ wins, while 57...♔e7

is answered by 58 ♕xc2 ♖xa7 59 ♕h7+, and 57...♔e6 by 58 ♕xc2 ♖xa7 59 ♕e4+, when White wins the rook.

Game 22

**Lago – Tal**

*Munich Olympiad 1958*

English Opening

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **c4** | **e5** |
| **2** | **♘c3** | **♘f6** |
| **3** | **♘f3** | |

It is interesting that up to the third move this game was identical to the Norcia-Keres encounter in the same match. Norcia played 3 g3 whereupon Black adopted the system worked out in detail by Keres, 3...c6, and quickly gained the advantage.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **3** | **...** | **d6** |
| **4** | **g3** | **g6** |
| **5** | **♗g2** | **♗g7** |
| **6** | **d3** | **0-0** |
| **7** | **♗d2** | |

For the time being White refrains from castling, considering his primary task to be the exchange of Black's dark-squared bishop. This could of course have been prevented, for example by playing 7...h6 8 ♕c1 ♔h7, but Black decided to carry out a pre-conceived plan.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **7** | **...** | **♘h5** |
| **8** | **♕c1** | **f5** |
| **9** | **♗h6** | **♘c6** |
| **10** | **♗xg7** | **♔xg7** |
| **11** | **♘d5** | **f4** |

In the absence of dark-squared bishops, this pawn set-up favours Black.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | **♕c3** | **♗e6** |
| **13** | **♘xf4** | |

Apparently a surprising move to make; in the given position, however, it is completely justified, since Black cannot give mate along the resulting open g-file, but is more likely to himself be mated.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **13** | **...** | **♘xf4** |

I spent some time considering the exchange sacrifice 13...♖xf4 14 gxf4 ♘xf4. On coming to the conclusion that after 15 ♗f1 ♗g4 16 ♘g1, the white pieces are excellently placed on their original squares, I decided against the sacrifice.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **14** | **gxf4** | **♖xf4** |
| **15** | **h4** | |

Less dangerous was 15 0-0-0 but White evidently considered that he would always be able to castle.

| | | |
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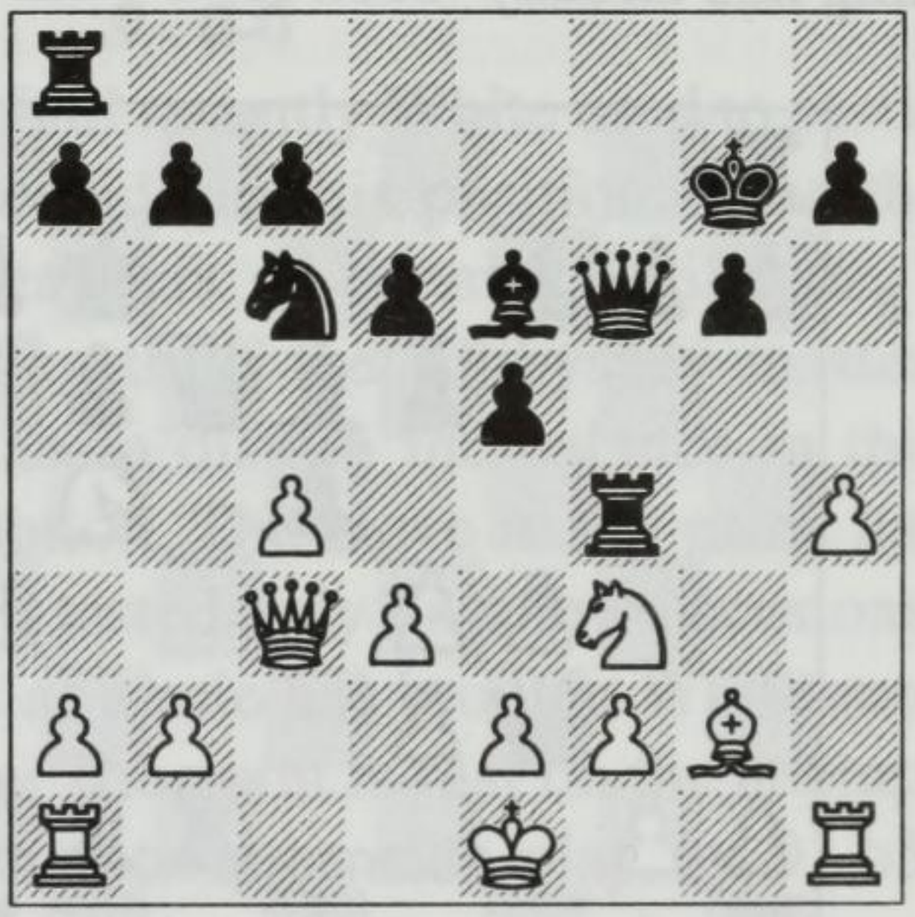
| **15** | **...** | **♕f6** *(D)* |

*W*



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **16** | **♘g5?** | |

After this outwardly strong move Black obtains a dangerous attack. White should have castled queenside.

**16 ... ♘d4!**

**17 e3**

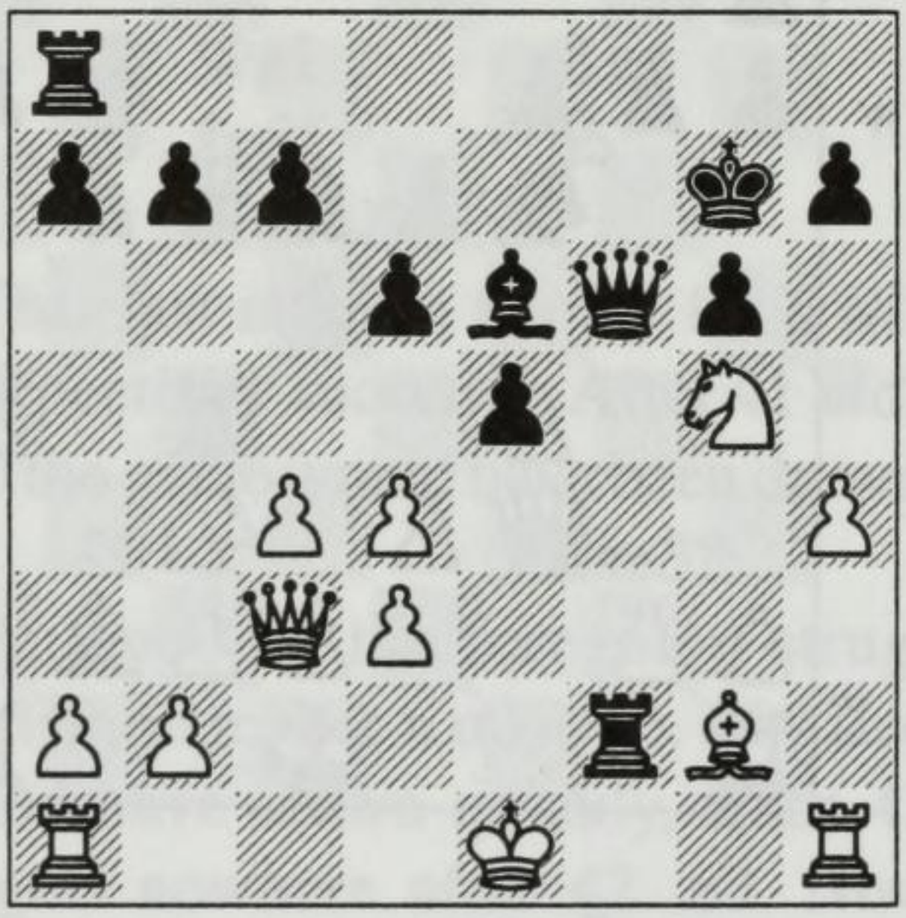
In the case of 17 ♘e4 Black was planning to sacrifice the exchange by 17...♖xe4. After both 18 ♗xe4 ♖f8 19 f3 ♕f4 and 18 dxe4 ♖f8 19 f3 ♕f4 20 ♔f2 ♕xe4, Black's initiative would more than compensate for White's insignificant material advantage.

**17 ... ♖xf2**

**18 exd4** *(D)*

On 18 ♘xe6+ there would have followed 18...♕xe6! 19 ♔xf2 ♖f8+ 20 ♔e1 ♕g4 21 exd4 (21 ♕d2 ♕g3+ 22 ♔d1 ♖f2) 21...♕xg2. It is curious that after the game my opponent demonstrated this variation, asserting, however, that it was unsound, since in the final position White can castle. At the time I agreed with him, spent some time worrying about this oversight, but then remembered that the white king had already 'been for a walk'.

*B*



With his move in the game, the Italian player sets a trap: 18...exd4 19 ♕xd4.

**18 ... ♗g4**

After this move it would appear that the white king, trapped in the centre of the board, must quickly perish. Lago finds an interesting defensive possibility.

**19 ♗f3! ♖xf3**

Here I thought for 40 minutes. This is probably the only way to keep the advantage. In the case of 19...♗xf3 20 ♔xf2 ♗xh1+ 21 ♔g1 exd4 22 ♕a5 b6 23 ♕b5 c6 24 ♕a6 the maximum that Black can count on is a draw by perpetual check. The immediate capture on d4 leads to roughly similar results after 20 ♕a5. Variations involving the sacrifice of the rook, for instance 19...♗xf3 20 ♔xf2 ♖f8, are refuted by 21 ♖hf1. I also considered the bold 19...h6, but this is refuted by the prosaic 20 dxe5 dxe5 21 ♗xg4 hxg5 22 0-0-0 ♕f4+ 23 ♔b1. I had to return to the main variation, and here I succeeded in finding a continuation which would maintain my advantage.

**20 0-0-0 ♕f4+**

**21 ♔b1 ♕xd4**

Other continuations would give White dangerous counterplay.

**22 ♕xd4 exd4**

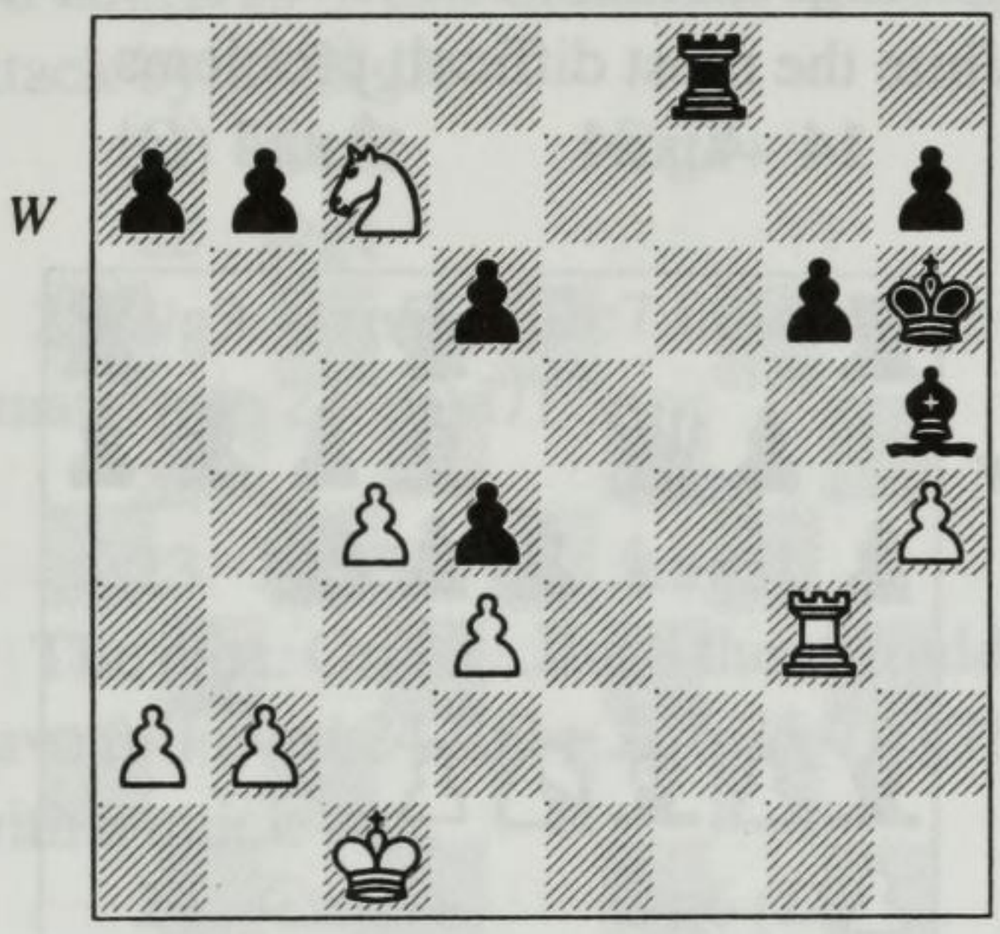
**23 ♖hg1**

This was the position my opponent was counting on, since the apparently forced continuation 23...♖f4 leads to a draw after 24 ♖de1 h6 25 ♘e6+ ♗xe6 26 ♖xe6; however, disillusionment awaits him.

**23 ... ♖g3!**

**24 ♖xg3 ♗xd1**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **25** | **♔c1** | **♗h5** |
| **26** | **♘e6+** | **♔h6** |
| **27** | **♘xc7** | **♖f8** *(D)* |




It was not easy to weigh up this ending in advance, since White's queenside pawns can become active. Black mainly concerned himself with the move 28 ♘b5, to which he intended to continue 28...♖f4 29 ♘xd6 ♗f3, followed by the advance of his king.

| | | |
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| **28** | **♘e6** | |

This prevents the manoeuvre mentioned above, but loses time, since the black pawn on d4 is not so important.

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| **28** | **...** | **♖f1+** |
| **29** | **♔c2** | **♖f2+** |
| **30** | **♔c1** | |

No better was 30 ♔b3 ♖f3 31 ♖xf3 ♗xf3 32 ♘xd4 ♗d1+ winning an important tempo.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **30** | **...** | **a6!** |
| **31** | **♘g5** | **♖f4** |
| **32** | **♘e4** | **♗f3** |
| **33** | **♘xd6** | **♔h5** |

White's position is lost. There followed:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **34** | **♖g5+** | **♔xh4** |
| **35** | **♖e5** | **h5** |
| **36** | **c5** | **g5** |
| **37** | **♘f5+** | **♖xf5** |
| **38** | **♖xf5** | **♔g4** |
| **39** | **♖f8** | **h4** |
| **40** | **♖d8** | **h3** |
| **41** | **♖xd4+** | **♔g3** |

**0-1**

Game 23

**Tal – Polugaevsky**

*USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1959*

Sicilian Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **c5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **d6** |
| **3** | **d4** | **cxd4** |
| **4** | **♘xd4** | **♘f6** |
| **5** | **♘c3** | **a6** |
| **6** | **♗g5** | **♘bd7** |
| **7** | **♗c4** | **♕a5** |
| **8** | **♕d2** | **e6** |
| **9** | **0-0** | |

Until recently White used to castle queenside in this position. Then the endeavours of certain 'Sicilianites', among them the Kuibyshev master, began to disturb the balance in this variation. The move in the game has been tested only on a few occasions, and as a rule has brought White success. The point is that on the attempt to initiate queenside play by 9...b5, there follows the somewhat stereotyped, but very strong sacrifice 10 ♗d5 exd5 11 ♘c6! ♕b6 12 exd5. The white king is totally safe, whereas his black colleague faces a far from easy

voyage. This was confirmed by the game Mnatsakanyan-Zurakhov from the Rostov Semi-final of the 26th USSR Championship.

**9 ... ♗e7**

In his game against me at Portorož, Larsen chose an unsuccessful plan: 9...h6 10 ♗h4 ♗e7 11 ♖ad1 ♘e5 12 ♗b3 and here he played 12...g5. However, after 13 ♗g3 ♗d7 14 f4 gxf4 15 ♗xf4 ♘h5? 16 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 17 ♔h1 ♘f6 18 ♘f3 ♕h5 White opened the centre to his advantage by 19 e5! dxe5 20 ♘e4!

**10 ♖ad1 ♘c5**

10...0-0 is bad because of 11 ♘d5. Polugaevsky had based all his hopes on the text-move, but the further course of the game shows that Black does not succeed in fully equalising.

**11 ♖fe1 ♗d7**

**12 a3**

This simple move discloses the dark side of Black's strategic plan: he is unable to maintain his pieces in their positions on the queenside.

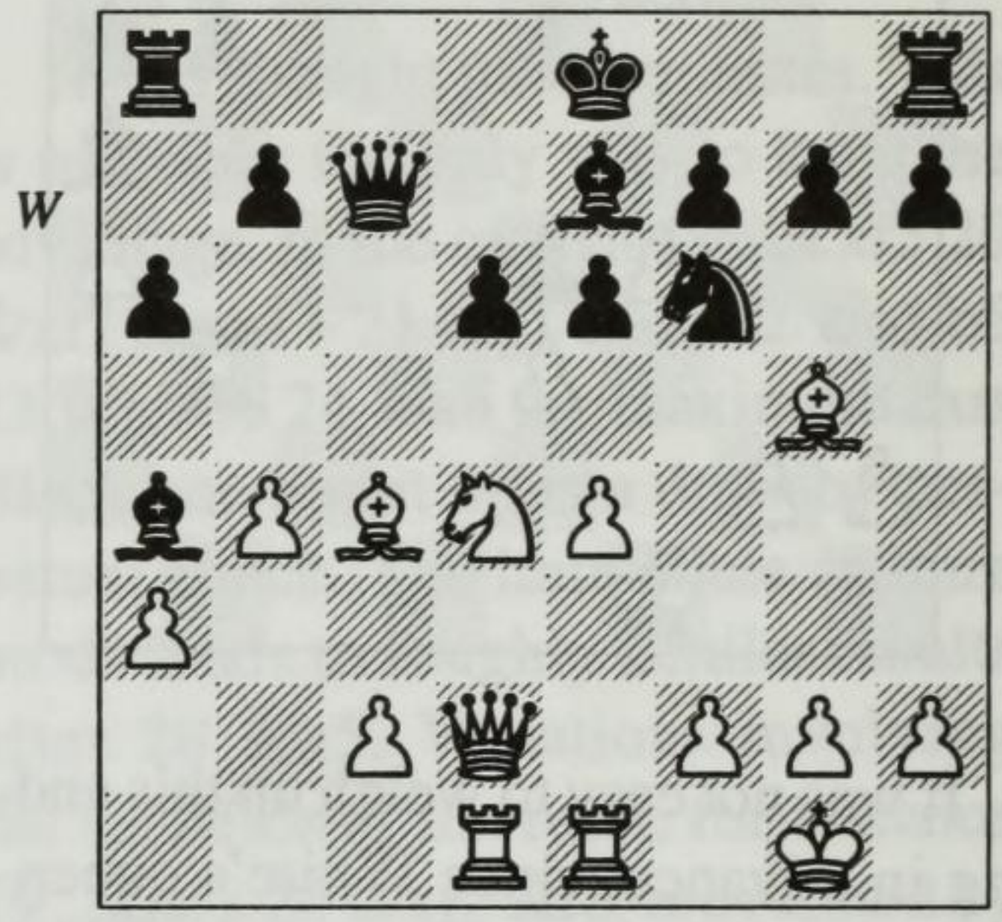
**12 ... ♕c7**

Here Black could have transposed into an ending by 12...♘fxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♕xd2 14 ♗xd2 ♘xe4 15 ♖xe4 d5 16 ♗xd5 exd5 17 ♖e2[1] ♔f8, but after 18 ♗b4! ♗xb4 19 axb4 his position is cheerless.

**13 b4 ♘a4**

The following replies were possible here: (a) 13...♘cxe4 14 ♘xe4 ♕xc4 15 ♗xf6 gxf6 16 ♘f5!; (b) 13...b5 14 ♘dxb5 axb5 15 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 16 ♗xb5+ ♘cd7 17 e5!; and (c) 13...♖c8 14 bxc5 ♕xc5 15 e5! ♕xc4 16 exf6 gxf6 17 ♘e4 fxg5 18 ♘f5. The text-move sets White the most difficult problems.

**14 ♘xa4 ♗xa4** *(D)*




**15 ♗xe6! fxe6**

**16 ♘xe6 ♕xc2**

**17 ♕d4 ♔f7**

**18 ♖c1 ♕a2**

**19 e5!**

White would achieve nothing by 19 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 20 ♖c7 ♕e6 21 ♗xf6+ ♕xf6 22 ♖xe7+ ♔g6.

**19 ... dxe5**

Black would also have a difficult position after 19...♕xe6 20 exf6 ♗xf6 21 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 22 ♕d5+ ♔f8 23 ♕xb7 (23 ♖e6 is also possible) 23...♖e8 24 ♕xa6 when White's passed pawns are very dangerous.

**20 ♕xe5 ♕xf2+**

This leads to simplification, but not to equality. The power of White's

---

1 17 ♖e5 wins a pawn and is probably stronger.

centralised forces is demonstrated by the following variation: 20...♖he8 21 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 22 ♖c7+ ♔g8 23 ♖xg7+! On 20...♕d5 White maintains a strong attack by 21 ♕g3.

**21 ♔xf2 ♘g4+**
**22 ♔g1**

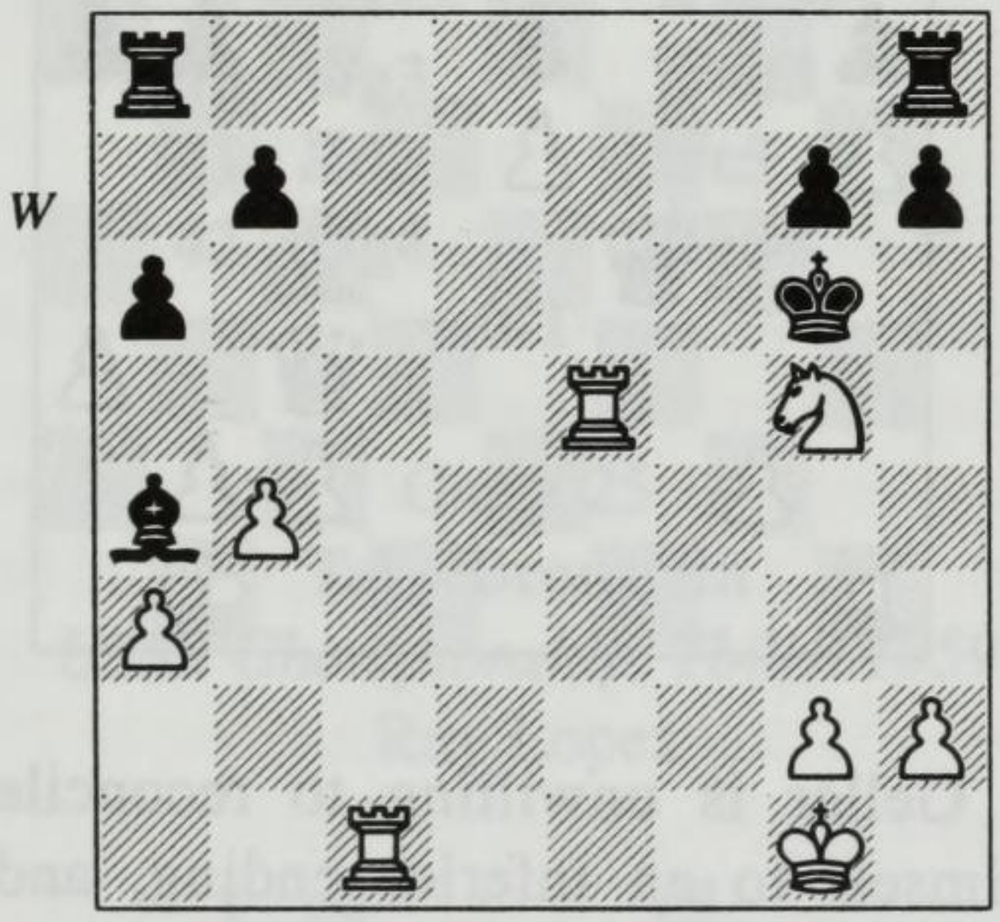
22 ♔g3 ♘xe5 23 ♖c7 fails, unfortunately, to 23...♘d7!

**22 ... ♘xe5**
**23 ♖xe5 ♗xg5!**

The best. On 23...♖ac8 there could have followed 24 ♖f1+ ♗f6 25 ♘xg7! with a quick win.

**24 ♘xg5+ ♔g6** *(D)*

Not 24...♔f6 since after 25 ♖cc5 ♖he8 26 ♘e4+ Black loses the exchange.




**25 ♘e6**

After 25 ♖e6+ ♔xg5 26 ♖c5+ ♔f4 27 ♔f2 Black manages to come out unscathed by 27...♗c6!, for example on 28 h3 there can follow 28...♗xg2, and if 28 g3+ ♔g4 29 ♖exc6 bxc6 30 ♔g2, then 30...g5.

**25 ... ♖he8**
**26 ♖e3 ♖ac8**
**27 ♖f1 ♗b5**
**28 ♖g3+ ♔h6**
**29 ♘xg7 ♖f8**

Here Black should have gone in for the rook ending arising after 29...♗xf1 30 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 31 ♔xf1. White would, of course, still have winning chances, but there would be certain technical difficulties to overcome.

**30 ♖e1 ♖f6**

White would also deliver mate after 30...♗d7 31 h3 ♖f7 32 ♖e4.

**31 h3 ♖c2**
**32 ♖e4 ♖c4**
**33 ♖e5 ♖c1+**
**34 ♔h2 1-0**

## Game 24

### Geller – Tal

*USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1959*

Modern Benoni Defence

**1 d4 ♘f6**
**2 c4 c5**
**3 d5 e6**
**4 ♘c3 exd5**
**5 cxd5 d6**
**6 e4 g6**
**7 ♘f3 ♗g7**

How many times has 'the world been told' that this system of defence is incorrect! Its virtue lies in the fact that Black always has the chance of creating counterplay in the centre or on the queenside.

**8 ♗g5**

This move restrains Black's forces, and restricts his possibilities.

**8 ... a6**
**9 a4 h6**
**10 ♗f4**

After 10 ♗h4 Black has a firm enough position, as was shown by Tolush-Suetin (26th USSR Championship Semi-final): 10...g5 11 ♗g3 ♘h5 12 ♘d2 ♘xg3 13 hxg3 ♘d7 14 ♗e2 ♘e5.

**10 ... ♗g4**
**11 ♗e2 0-0**
**12 0-0**

If White had played 12 ♘d2 then there could have followed 12...♗xe2 13 ♕xe2 ♘h5 14 ♗e3 f5 15 exf5 ♖xf5 and 16 g4 fails to 16...♘f4.

**12 ... ♖e8**
**13 ♕c2**

In this position also, after 13 ♘d2 ♗xe2 14 ♕xe2 ♘h5 15 ♗e3 ♘d7 16 g4 ♘hf6 17 f3 Black obtains sufficient counterplay. 13 h3 is a mistake because of 13...♘xe4.

**13 ... ♕c7**

On 13...♕e7, 14 ♖fe1 is unpleasant.

**14 ♖fe1 ♘bd7**

On assessing the position reached it can be boldly asserted that Black has successfully overcome his opening difficulties.

**15 h3**

The master Y. Vasilchuk suggested here 15 ♖ad1 so as after 15...♗xf3 16 ♗xf3 ♖ab8 to initiate sharp play in the centre by 17 e5 ♘xe5 18 ♗xe5 dxe5 19 d6 but, as it is not difficult to show, Black can repulse this attack by 19...♕d7.

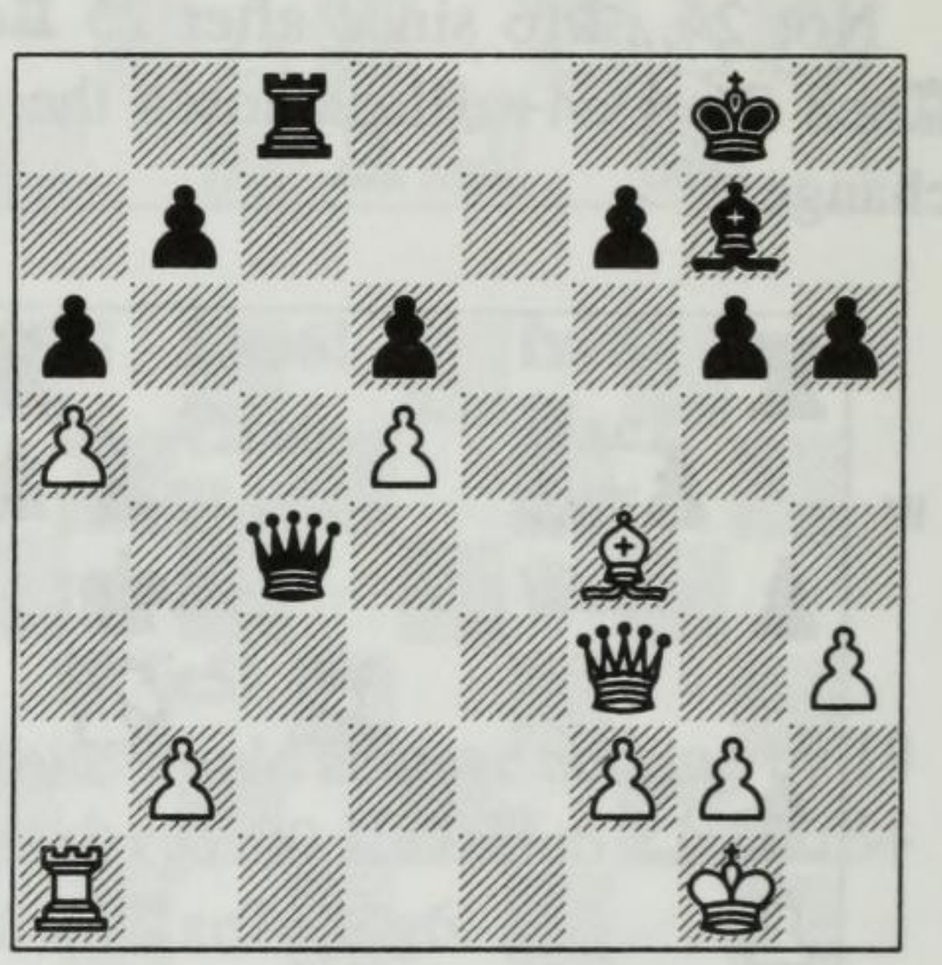
**15 ... ♗xf3**
**16 ♗xf3 c4**
**17 ♗e2**

To meet the threat of 17...♘c5.

**17 ... ♖ac8**
**18 a5 ♘c5**
**19 ♗xc4 ♘fxe4**
**20 ♘xe4 ♖xe4**
**21 ♖xe4 ♘xe4**
**22 ♕xe4**

On 22 ♖c1 Black was planning 22...♕e7 23 ♖e1 f5 when 24 f3 fails to 24...♕h4.

**22 ... ♕xc4**
**23 ♕f3** *(D)*




Geller is unwilling to reconcile himself to an inferior ending, and keeps his queen in order to support a desperate counter-attack on the king-side. After the objectively stronger 23 ♖a4 there could have followed 23...♕c2 24 ♕xc2 ♖xc2 25 ♗xd6! ♖d2 26 ♖b4 ♖xd5 27 ♗c7 ♖b5 and Black's advantage is only of a theoretical nature. White evidently underestimated his opponent's strong reply.

**23 ... ♕b4!**

After this move material losses are inevitable.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **24** | **♕g3** | **♕xb2** |
| **25** | **♖e1** | **♕b5** |
| **26** | **♕f3** | **♗f8!** |
| **27** | **h4** | **♕xa5** |
| **28** | **♖b1** | **b5** |
| **29** | **h5** | **g5** |
| **30** | **♕g3** | **♕a2** |
| **31** | **♖d1** | **♕e2** |
| **32** | **♖d3** | **♗g7** |
| **33** | **♕h3** | **♖c2** |
| **34** | **♗xd6** | **♖c1+** |
| **35** | **♔h2** | **♕xf2** |
| **36** | **♖f3** | **♕g1+** |
| **37** | **♔g3** | **♕e1+** |
| **38** | **♔h2** | **♗e5+** |
| **39** | **♗xe5** | **♕xe5+** |
| **40** | **♕g3** | **♕xd5** |
| **41** | **♖d3** | **♕c5** |
| **42** | **♕g4** | **♕e5+** |

**0-1**

Game 25

**Tal – Bronstein**

*USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1959*

Ruy Lopez

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **e5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **♘c6** |
| **3** | **♗b5** | **a6** |
| **4** | **♗a4** | **♘f6** |
| **5** | **0-0** | **♗e7** |
| **6** | **♖e1** | **b5** |
| **7** | **♗b3** | **d6** |
| **8** | **c3** | **0-0** |
| **9** | **h3** | **♘a5** |
| **10** | **♗c2** | **c5** |
| **11** | **d4** | **♘c6** |
| **12** | **♘bd2** | **♕b6** |

A move which has recently become popular. Black forces his opponent to clear up the position in the centre. Besides, in a number of variations the black queen threatens f2. However, this continuation also has its drawbacks, the chief of which is the remoteness of the queen from the kingside. One gains the impression that here, as in the Rauzer Variation, White gets a comfortable game.

**13 dxc5**

As practice has shown, it is less promising to block the centre. In this case White's threats, associated with the exploitation of the f5-square, are somewhat problematic.

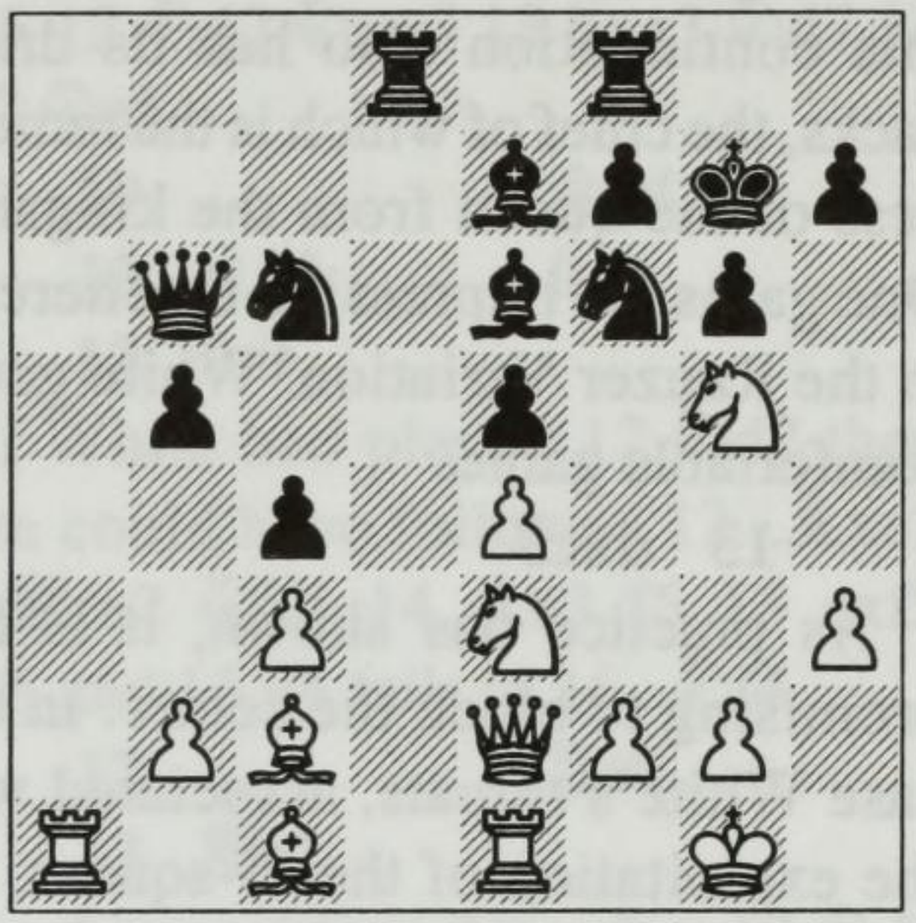
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **13** | **...** | **dxc5** |
| **14** | **♘f1** | **♗e6** |
| **15** | **♘e3** | **♖ad8** |
| **16** | **♕e2** | **g6** |
| **17** | **♘g5** | **c4** |

Now it is unfavourable for White to exchange on e6, since his forces will be tied to the defence of f2. If White attempts to play for an attack by 18 ♕f3, then Black replies 18...h6 19 ♘xe6 fxe6, and White is unable to exploit the weakening of the enemy king's position. Even such a strong measure as 20 ♘g4, with the aim of seeking something other than perpetual check after 20...♘xg4 21 ♕xg4 ♕xf2+ 22 ♔h2 ♕xc2, gets nowhere after the simple 20...h5. For the time being, therefore White turns to play on the queenside. Here also the direct 18

b3 is unfavourable for White after 18...cxb3 19 axb3 a5, followed by ...b4. Therefore the pressure must be increased gradually.

**18 a4 ♔g7!**

**19 axb5 axb5** *(D)*




**20 ♖b1**

20 b3 is once again unfavourable after 20...cxb3 21 ♘xe6+ fxe6 22 ♗xb3 ♘xe4 23 ♘g4 ♘xc3! (this is the idea behind Black's 18th move – it is not check when the pawn on e6 is captured) 24 ♗h6+ ♔h8 25 ♕b2 b4 26 ♗xf8 and, despite the loss of the exchange, Black's position would not be short of supporters.

After the move in the game, 21 b3 is now a real threat. True, White had to reckon with 20...♘d4? 21 cxd4 exd4, when his pieces present an excellent target for the black pawns. Against this I had prepared the variation 22 ♘d5 ♗xd5 23 exd5 d3 24 ♕xe7 dxc2 25 ♗e3! (25 ♘e6+ ♔g8) 25...cxb1♕ 26 ♗xb6 ♕f5 27 ♘e6+.

Black's reply is the strongest.

**20 ... ♘a5**

**21 ♘f3 ♕c7**

**22 ♘d5 ♗xd5**

In the case of 22...♘xd5 23 exd5 ♗xd5 24 ♘xe5, the threats of ♘g4 and ♕e3 give White a strong attack.

**23 exd5 ♖fe8!**

**24 ♕xe5 ♕xe5**

**25 ♘xe5 ♘xd5**

In order to complete the picture, it should be added that at this point Bronstein had used up nearly all his time, and was having to move quickly. Here Black could have created interesting complications by 25...♗d6 26 ♗h6+ ♔xh6 27 ♘xf7+ ♔g7 28 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 29 ♘xd6 ♖e2 30 ♖a1 ♖xc2 31 ♖xa5 ♖xb2 with good drawing prospects. Now Black's difficulties increase.

**26 ♖a1 ♘b3**

It would appear that Black has no other move. I was therefore fascinated when after the game my opponent suggested the original continuation 26...♘b4!?. However, chess would be too beautiful a game if such moves were to work. White could reply 27 cxb4 ♗xb4 28 ♖e3 ♗c5 29 ♖xa5 ♗xe3 30 ♗xe3 maintaining an adequate superiority.

**27 ♗xb3 cxb3**

**28 ♗h6+ ♔g8**

Now Black loses. He should have played 28...♔xh6 29 ♘xf7+ ♔g7 30 ♘xd8 ♖xd8 31 ♖a7 ♔f8 32 ♖b7 ♗f6 33 ♖xb5 ♘xc3 34 bxc3 ♗xc3 when the strong passed pawn gives Black drawing chances. Evidently Black

underestimated the strength of White's 30th move.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **29** | **♘c6** | **♖c8** |
| **30** | **♖ad1!** | **♖xc6** |
| **31** | **♖xd5** | |

Because of the threat of mate, Black loses his queenside pawns. The rest is clear, since White gets his bishop into play.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **31** | **...** | **f6** |
| **32** | **♖xb5** | **g5** |
| **33** | **♖xb3** | **♔f7** |
| **34** | **♖b7** | **♖e6** |
| **35** | **♖xe6** | **♔xe6** |
| **36** | **h4** | **♖g8** |
| **37** | **f4** | **♗c5+** |
| **38** | **♔f1** | **gxh4** |
| **39** | **♖b5** | **♖c8** |
| **40** | **f5+** | **♔d6** |
| **41** | **b4** | **h3** |
| **42** | **♖xc5** | **h2** |
| **43** | **♗f4+** | **1-0** |

Game 26

**Tal – Stoltz**

*Telegraph Game 1959*

Sicilian Defence

In making judgements about chess, many people are in the habit of taking into account only tournament or match-play where the players sit opposite one another and endeavour to gain a victory in their combat within five hours. However, a tournament encounter is only one of a variety of chess art-forms. Analysis of opening variations, chess compositions, correspondence chess, and many other elements must be considered when we talk about the art of chess as a single unit.

I have permitted myself this introduction in order to emphasise the thoughts that overtook me at the beginning of last year. The well-known Stockholm newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* invited me to play a game by telegraph with the Swedish Grandmaster Stoltz.

If I had declined this invitation I would have lost the joy of taking part in a game against a player with an interesting, sharp, combinative style (let me remind the reader that the Swedish grandmaster has won many beauty prizes for tournament games). I would also have missed trying out my powers in a thoroughly strange field. Correspondence chess is different from other chess forms in certain characteristic respects. A player is not handicapped by the same time-control (although in correspondence chess there is occasionally a time forfeit in fact, through the fault of the postal service) and he can calmly analyse the developing position in domestic surroundings undisturbed by the 'Sword of Damocles' on the chess clock.

In order to give as true as possible a picture of the contest, I have used telegrams received from Stockholm and a diary written on the specified day.

**22nd March**

A telegram received from Stockholm with the suggestion of playing

this game. Simultaneously a newspaper proposed that the opponents choose their opening variation to make the game as interesting as possible. What should I choose? After a little thought I decided on one of the sharpest Sicilian Defence variations. And so the duel of the correspondence game has begun.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **c5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **♘c6** |
| **3** | **d4** | **cxd4** |
| **4** | **♘xd4** | **♘f6** |
| **5** | **♘c3** | **d6** |
| **6** | **♗g5** | **e6** |
| **7** | **♕d2** | **♗e7** |
| **8** | **0-0-0** | **0-0** |
| **9** | **♘b3** | **♕b6** |
| **10** | **f3** | **a6** |

More precise than 10...♖d8 after which White has the interesting manoeuvre 11 ♗e3 ♕c7 12 ♕f2 stopping the counter-attack on the queenside.

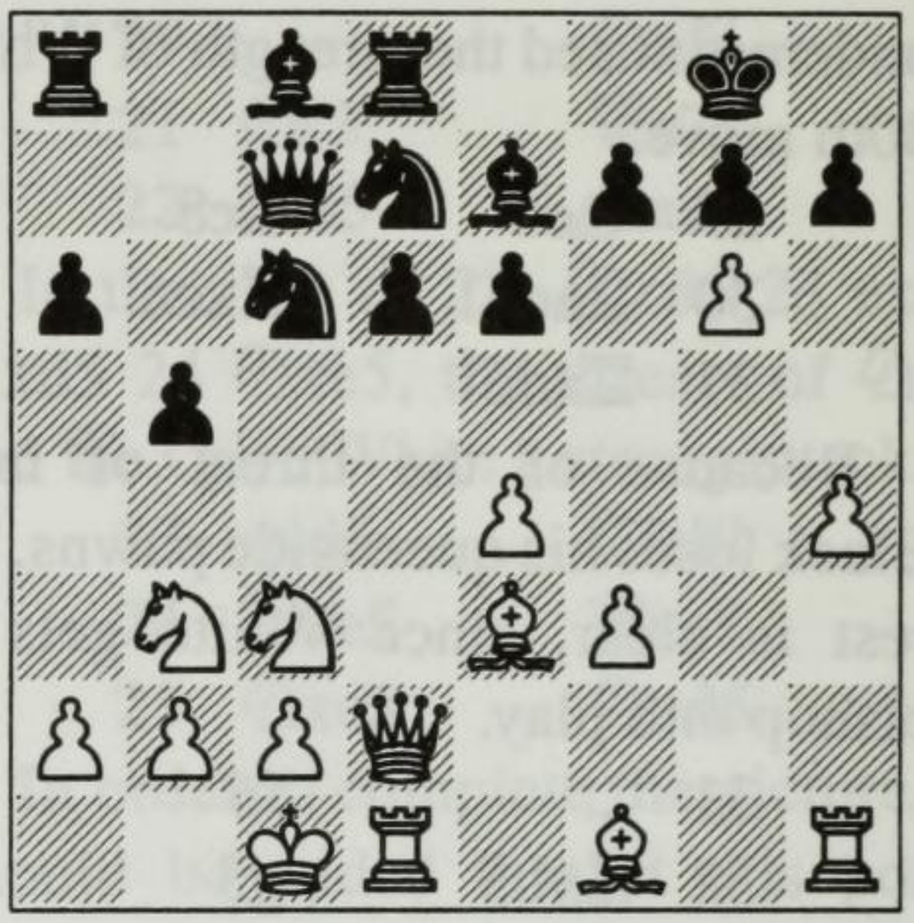
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **11** | **g4** | **♖d8** |
| **12** | **♗e3** | **♕c7** |
| **13** | **h4** | **b5** |

A position has arrived where nothing is hidden. The opponents' aims are completely evident: to reach the opposing king as soon as possible. These games remind one of short-distance sprints, where the deciding elements are speed and energy.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **14** | **g5** | **♘d7** |
| **15** | **g6** *(D)* | |

In front of you is the position I offered my Swedish opponent. If I am not mistaken the press published only

*B*



one game with this variation: Spassky-Boleslavsky, 25th USSR Championship, Riga 1958. Boleslavsky destroyed the uninvited guest with the f-pawn and was forced to struggle for a long while: 15...fxg6 16 h5 gxh5 17 ♖xh5 ♘f6 18 ♖g5 ♘e5 19 ♕g2 etc.

Apart from anything else, this variation was employed again in a training game Tal-Koblents, which in my view is rather interesting. I am using this opportunity to show it to the reader.

**Tal – Koblents**

*Training Game, Riga 1957*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **15** | **...** | **hxg6** |

This looks very risky but it is possibly the most powerful.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **16** | **h5** | **gxh5** |
| **17** | **♖xh5** | **♘f6** |
| **18** | **♖h1** | **d5!** |

Not only opening up lively play in the centre, but also covering the queen's path to h2. In order not to hand over the initiative, White decided on yet another pawn sacrifice.

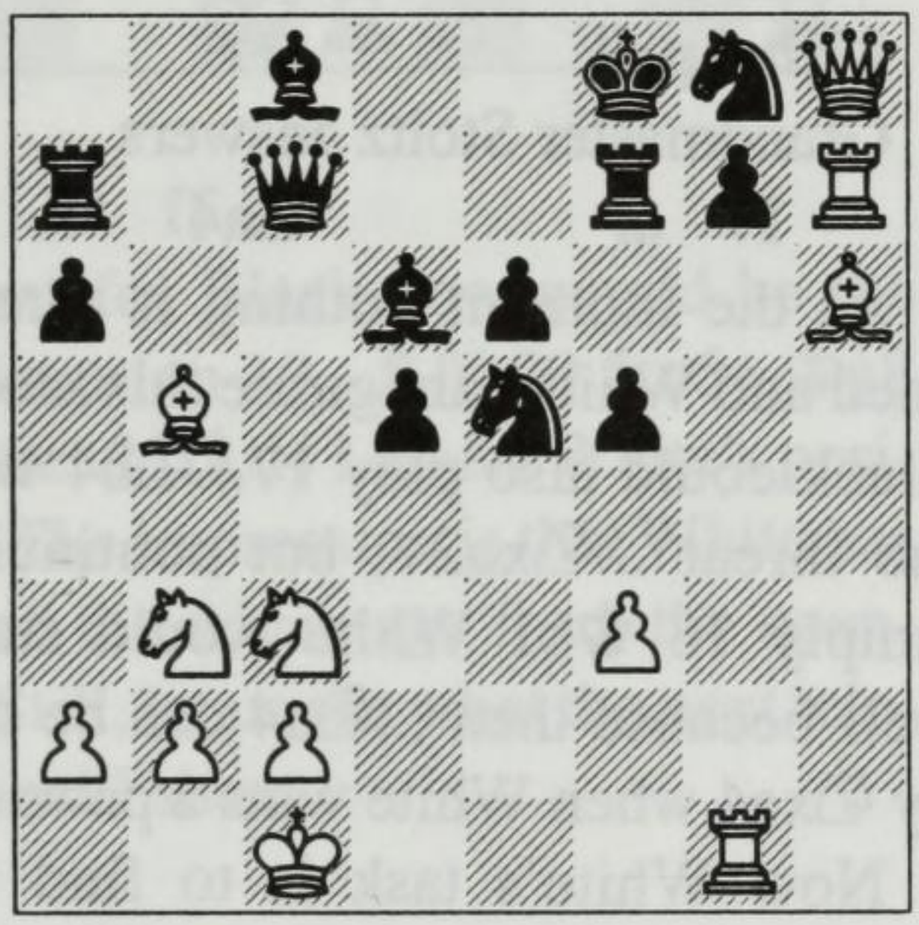
**19 e5! ♘xe5**

It is of course obvious that 19...♕xe5 20 ♗f4 ♕f5 21 ♗d3 would be bad for Black.

**20 ♗f4 ♗d6**
**21 ♕h2 ♔f8**
**22 ♕h8+ ♘g8**

Possibly better would have been 22...♔e7, but on the other hand the game continuation develops into a most rare position after the following forced moves.

**23 ♖h7 f5**
**24 ♗h6 ♖d7**
**25 ♗xb5! ♖f7**
**26 ♖g1 ♖a7** *(D)*




The white pieces occupy rather uncomfortable squares. The square g7, the key to Black's position, is pierced but it does not yield. If Black were to strengthen his forces and go over to a counter-attack, then White's main forces would only be able to send a telegram of sympathy to their king. Thus White has to play very energetically.

**27 ♘d4**

Introducing one more piece into the attack, at the same time putting the square e6 under control. In this way, if there were to follow 27...♕b6, then White would win at once, employing a move characteristic of chess problems: 28 ♗d7!!

Instead, Black finds an imaginative idea: to sacrifice a piece in order to strengthen the square g7.

**27 ... ♘g4!!**
**28 fxg4 ♗e5**

Weaker would be 28...♗f4+ 29 ♗xf4 ♕xf4+ 30 ♔b1 ♕xd4 31 ♖gh1 with the threat of 32 ♕xg8+. Now, in the case of 31...♖fb7 White has the very strong move 32 ♗e8 while on 31...♖fe7, the quiet 32 g5 is decisive.

It seems that Black has reached his goal. He is a piece down but White has three pieces threatened. One gets the impression that Black has taken over the initiative. Nonetheless, within White's reach there is a combination which would give him victory. It seems to me that such a combination is used here for the first time.

**29 ♘c6!**

What a pity it would be to part with the beautiful knight – but the bishop on e5 is Public Enemy Number 1. White is paying no attention to the rook on a7.

**29 ... ♗xc3**

Foreseeing, after 30 bxc3 axb5 31 ♘xa7 ♕xa7, the coming counter-attack. After 30 bxc3, also possible would be 30...♖b7.

**30 ♗e3!**

Again attacking, and once again not the rook but the square c5. The threat is ♗c5+ with mate in a few moves. The black bishop is locked out of the game, and this creates ideal conditions for the deciding attack.

With his next move White gains an important tempo.

**30 ... d4**
**31 ♖gh1**

Threatening 32 ♕xg8+ with mate to follow.

**31 ... ♖d7**
**32 ♗g5! axb5**
**33 ♖1h6!**

The aim of the combination has become obvious. White forces his way into the square g7 with a devil-may-care attitude. There is no defence to the deciding threat 34 ♖f6+ gxf6 35 ♗h6+.

The remaining moves were:

**33 ... d3**
**34 bxc3 d2+**
**35 ♔d1 ♕xc6**
**36 ♖f6+ ♖f7**
**37 ♕xg7+ 1-0**

And now let us return to the diary.

**6th April**

Finally a reply arrived. The Swedish grandmaster chose a third variation which looks very interesting. Ignoring the advance of White's pawns, Black quietly prepares a counter-attack.

**15 ... ♘c5**

Seemingly Black wants to manoeuvre this knight to a4 and its neighbour from c6 to c4 via e5, or straight to b4. That is why White has to speed up.

**16 gxf7+ ♔xf7**
**17 ♗h3**

White is mounting pressure on the e6-square. The semi-open g-file also favours White's attack. It would be interesting to know in which way Grandmaster Stoltz wants to counter-attack on the queen's flank. It seems at first that 17...♘e5 would be necessary but after 18 ♗d4 ♘c4 19 ♕g2 White would be first to gain the initiative. Now White's position does not look bad. A telegram is sent – I wait for the answer.

**17th April**

Grandmaster Stoltz answers

**17 ... ♘a4**

At the moment nothing is threatened and White can ignore this move. Black could also play 17...♘b4 with the threat ...♘xa2+, but continuing simply 18 ♔b1 White would stand well because then ...♘a4 can be met by ♘xa4 when White wins a pawn.

Now White's task is to find the Achilles' Heel in Black's position. Seemingly it is not the square g7, for with ...♗f6 Black can cover the threats easily. That is why I decided to start an attack with my f-pawn.

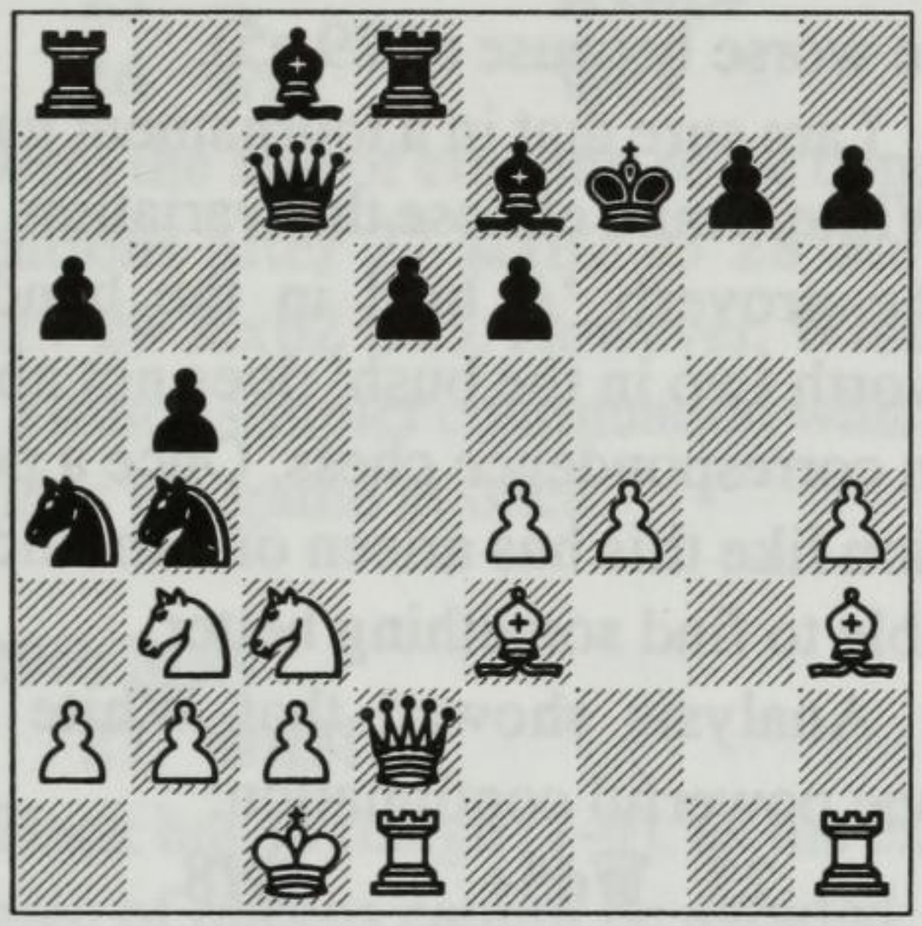
**18 f4**

**3rd May**

It looks as if Black is in a very aggressive mood.

**18 ... ♘b4** *(D)*

This uninvited guest appears unpleasant, but what is Black really threatening? On 19...♘xc3 20 bxc3 ♘xa2+ 21 ♔b2, the result is the loss of a piece. I can not see any other threats. In that case ...




**19 f5**

Best for Black now would be the continuation 19...♗f6 20 fxe6+ ♔g8 but after 21 ♗d4 I prefer White's position. The impression is that White has gained the advantage from the opening. Still, let us see what the next telegram will show.

**7th May**

**19 ... e5**

A move which, to tell the truth, I did not expect. The first natural reaction of any chess player would be 20 ♘d5, but here we see the advantage of correspondence chess; without hurrying, it is possible to analyse the variations arising from this move.

So 20 ♘d5 ♘xd5 21 ♕xd5+ ♔f8. How to continue the attack? Black is preparing, with ...♗b7 and ...d5, to open up play in the centre. White can take the rook by 22 ♕xa8 and after 22...♗b7 23 ♕a7 ♖a8 White has the interesting tactical idea 24 ♘d4, and with the threat 25 ♘e6+ White saves his queen.

There is only one question: is that good enough, because after 24...exd4 25 ♕xd4 ♗f6 26 ♕xd6+ ♕xd6 27 ♖xd6 ♗xb2+ 28 ♔b1 ♗xe4 the position is very sharp and Black's initiative looks dangerous. White can also gain the exchange in a different way by playing 22 f6 and after 22...♗xf6 23 ♕xa8 ♗b7 24 ♕a7 ♖a8 25 ♘c5 ♘xc5 (or 25...dxc5 26 ♖d7) 26 ♗xc5 dxc5 27 ♖d7 ♕xd7 28 ♕xa8+ ♗xa8 29 ♗xd7 ♗xe4, Black, with two pawns for the exchange, can hope for a good endgame.

So 20 ♘d5 does not give any solution to the problems of the position. It is interesting to note that Black's threats are still very mild – he cannot take the pawn on a2, because he would be in danger of losing the knight. Should White not exploit this fact? Thus I got the idea of playing 20 ♘xa4. The complications which would follow look very promising for White.

Black's answer is forced because 20...bxa4 21 ♕xb4 loses the pawn without compensation. That is why Black has to play 20...♘xa2+ 21 ♔b1 bxa4. By analysing this position I found that White has two squares for his knight: either a1 or a5. On a5 the knight is not safe but on a1 it looks

uncomfortable. Analysis shows that White can choose the first and more active continuation.

So I send the telegram to Stockholm.

**9th May**

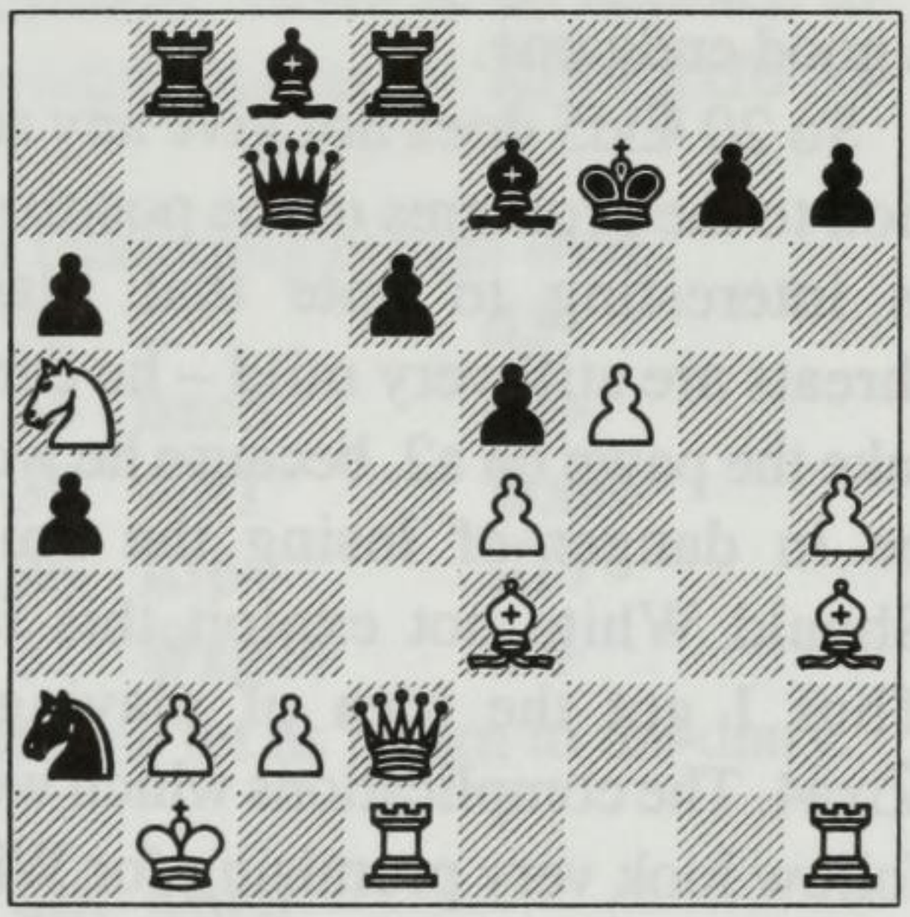
I offered the variation:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **20** | **♘xa4** | **♘xa2+** |
| **21** | **♔b1** | **bxa4** |
| **22** | **♘a5** | |

**11th May**

This time the answer was not unexpected, 22...d5 does not work because of 23 ♔xa2 dxe4 24 ♕c3. Now Black is trying to catch the knight on a5 by playing ...

**22 ... ♖b8** *(D)*



Now we see that White, by continuing 23 ♔xa2 ♖b5 24 b4, can keep an extra piece, but then he has to be ready for the possibility 24...d5. My wish was to win the game in a more comfortable way. That is why I looked for other possibilities.

One variation would be 23 ♔xa2 ♖b5 24 c4 ♖xa5 25 ♕b4 threatening 26 ♗b6. The same move decides after 25...d5, but Black can find counterplay by sacrificing the exchange with 25...♖c5! 26 ♗xc5 dxc5 27 ♕xa4 ♖d4 28 ♖xd4 cxd4! (28...exd4 would be worse because of 29 e5).

I am sure that in a tournament game White would choose this variation, but the proverb 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush' does not apply in correspondence chess. Once a position like this has arisen one should be able to find something better.

Analysis showed that White has one powerful continuation:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **23** | **♕d5+** | **♔f8** |
| **24** | **♔xa2** | |

Black has two possibilities. It will be interesting to see which he will choose.

**16th May**

**24 ... ♕xc2**

Black is unable to avoid the temptation to threaten mate in one. To be truthful, no better was 24...♖b5 because of 25 ♕c6 ♕xa5 26 f6 and White wins another piece.

The continuation in the game is sharper, but now White's only task is to be a little careful. However, he has a very simple move.

**25 ♖d2**

Here I want to note that this last part of the game we played at the time that I started to play in the International tournament at Zurich. One evening I

was analysing a completely lost adjourned game against the Swiss Master Bhend and then the telegram arrived.

**18th May**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **25** | **...** | **♖xb2+** |
| **26** | **♔a1** | **♕c3** |

With the aim of creating some complications after 27 ♖xb2 a3 28 ♗c1 axb2+ 29 ♗xb2 ♕f3. However, White has a much simpler continuation which decides the game at once.

**20th May**

**27 ♕d3!**

Black has to resign (**1-0**), as the exchange of queens cannot be avoided.

I must report that I played this game with great pleasure, and on the whole it changed my sceptical view of correspondence chess.

Game 27

**Kupper – Tal**

*Zurich 1959*

Sicilian Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **c5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **d6** |
| **3** | **d4** | **cxd4** |
| **4** | **♘xd4** | **♘f6** |
| **5** | **♘c3** | **a6** |
| **6** | **♗g5** | **e6** |
| **7** | **f4** | **b5!** |

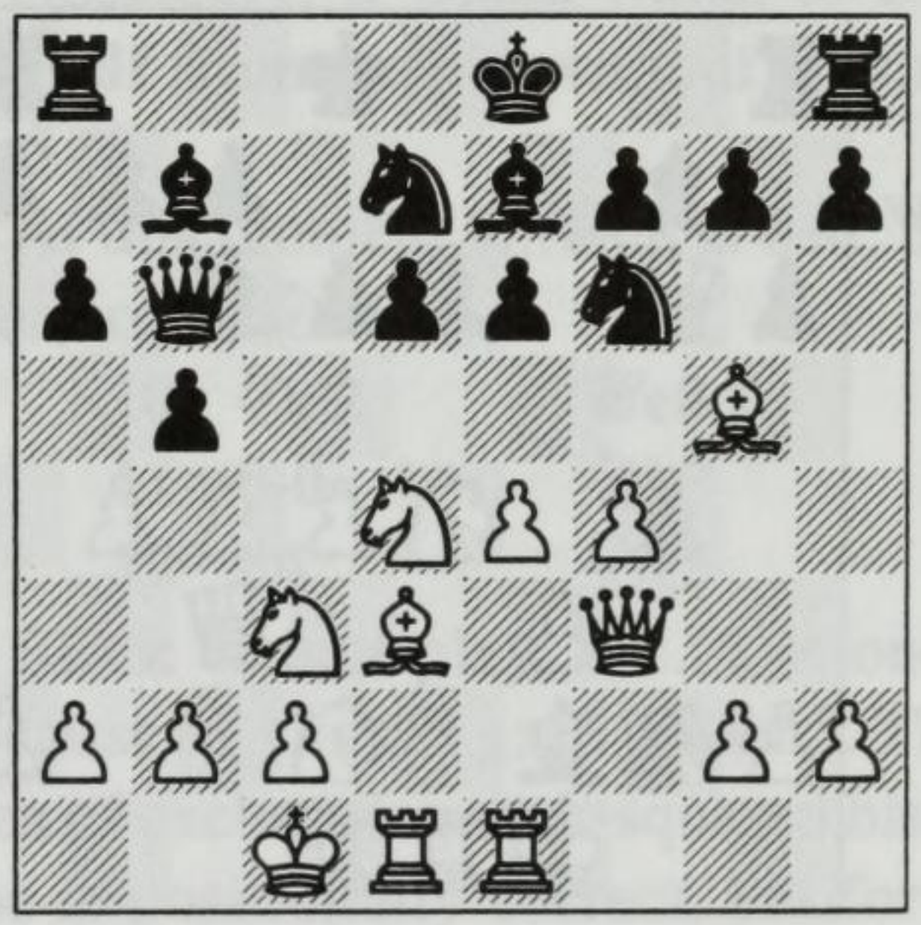
This incisive move is not often used in tournament play. It owes its origin to the Russian master Shaposhnikov. The theoretician sees it as advantageous to White, but having lost the first round in the tournament I decided to ignore theory and endeavoured to force a sharp and complicated battle.

**8 ♕f3**

After this move Black overcomes his opening difficulties. Much better would be 8 e5. It is interesting to note that at the 26th USSR Championship Nikitin, playing against Polugaevsky, also did not continue with 8 e5 and Black quickly took the initiative.

After 8 e5 dxe5 9 fxe5 ♕c7 10 exf6 ♕e5+ 11 ♗e2 ♕xg5 12 0-0 ♖a7! 13 ♕d3 (Gligorić-Bhend, round fourteen) White gained the advantage.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **8** | **...** | **♗b7** |
| **9** | **♗d3** | **♗e7** |
| **10** | **0-0-0** | **♕b6** |
| **11** | **♖he1** | **♘bd7** *(D)* |




**12 ♘ce2**

I considered the thematic, but quite dangerous 12 ♘d5 which had first come to mind when making my 10th move. After this it is impossible to continue 12...exd5 because of 13 ♘f5

nor can Black play 12...♘xd5 because of 13 exd5. After 12 ♘d5 I would have replied 12...♕xd4 and after 13 ♘c7+ ♔d8 14 ♘xa8 ♕c5! Following White's passive text-move, Black rapidly takes the initiative.

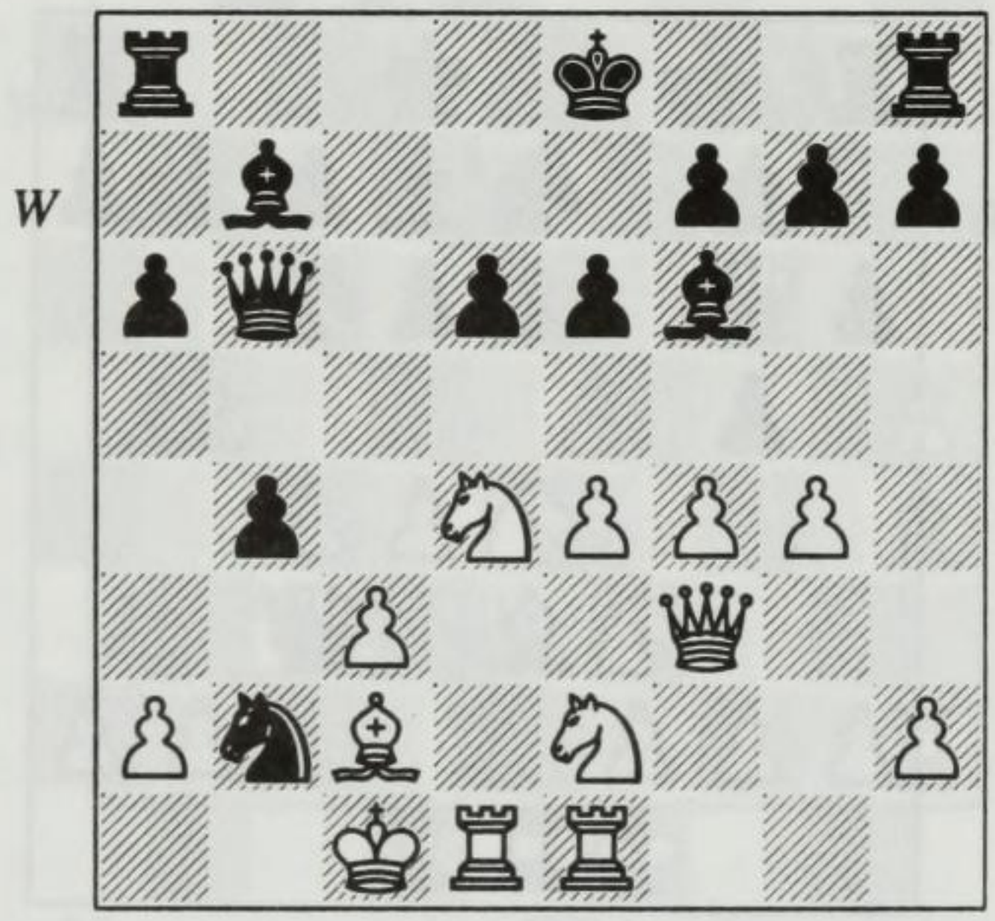
**12 ... ♘c5**
**13 ♗xf6**

Another small positional capitulation. More active was 13 ♘g3 and if 13...h6 then 14 ♗h4 with an unclear position.

**13 ... ♗xf6**
**14 g4 ♘a4**

Here Black is already preparing for a sacrificial attack. White's next move is in fact forced. Weak would be 15 g5 because of 15...♗xd4 16 ♘xd4 ♘xb2!

**15 c3 b4**
**16 ♗c2 ♘xb2** *(D)*



In sacrificing the knight I did not calculate variations. It would be strange if, after this sacrifice, White were able to find a defence against Black's overwhelming attack.

**17 ♔xb2 bxc3+**
**18 ♔xc3 0-0**
**19 ♖b1 ♕a5+**

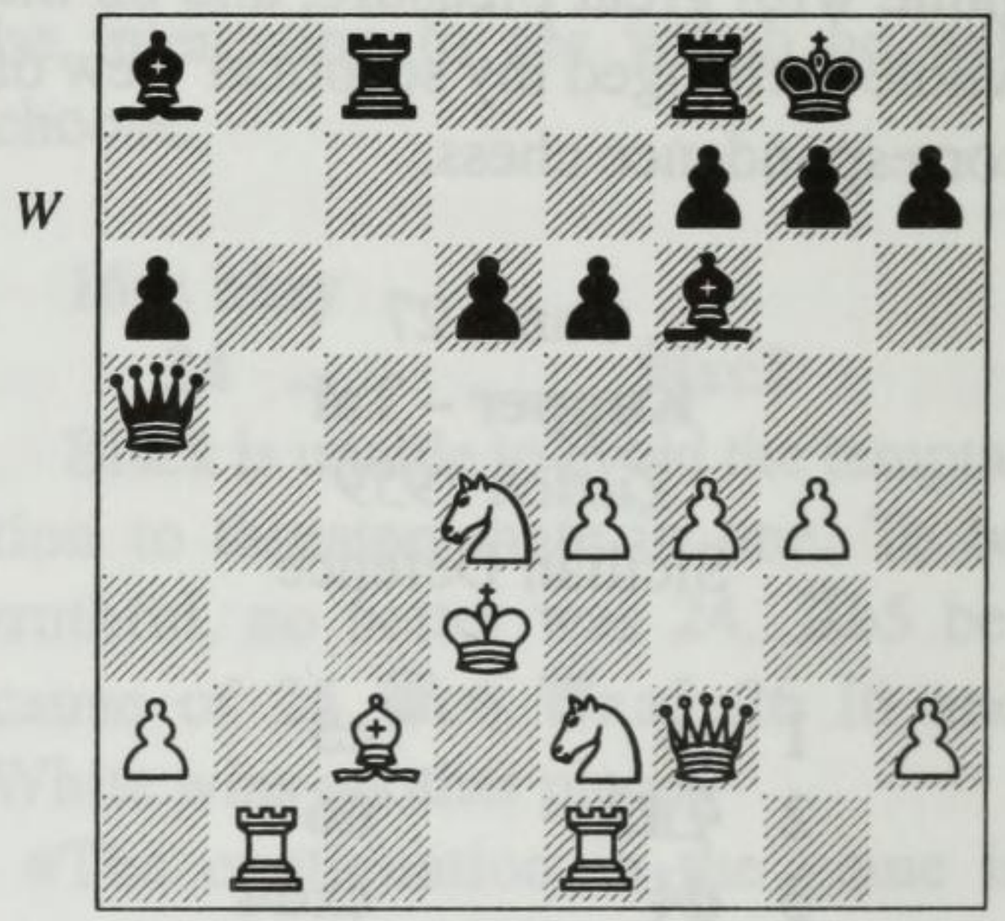
The strongest continuation. Black is forcing White's king to an 'active' position on d3. Weaker is 20 ♔b2 ♕b4+ and Black wins.

**20 ♔d3 ♖ac8**
**21 ♕f2**

An interesting continuation was 21 ♖ec1 after which Black would have the choice of 21...♗xd4 22 ♖xb7 ♗b6 or the even sharper 21...e5 with very complicated play.

**21 ... ♗a8!** *(D)*

It is clear that the further sacrifices 21...♖xc2 or 21...♗xd4, however tempting, will not work. After the passive text-move all of Black's threats retain their full power.



**22 ♖b3?**

The decisive mistake; now White loses by force. In my opinion a better chance was 22 g5 ♗d8 23 ♖ec1, but even then after ...d5 or ...e5 the fall of White's king would be unavoidable.

**22 ... e5**

**23 g5 exd4**
**24 ♘xd4**

Only now does White seem to realise that 24 gxf6 ♖xc2 25 ♔xc2 would be useless because of 25...♕xa2+ 26 ♖b2 ♖c8+! or 26...♗xe4+!.

**24 ... ♗xd4**
**0-1**

Game 28

## Tal – Fischer

*Candidates Tournament, Bled 1959*

King's Indian Defence

**1 d4 ♘f6**

Despite his youth the American Champion is very conservative in his choice of the openings. Playing with White he plays only O. Bender's[1] recognised move e4, and with Black he operates only with the Sicilian or King's Indian systems. Preparation against an opponent like this is not difficult. However, it is interesting to note that Fischer has prepared this narrow repertoire very well. Many chess players were surprised when after the game Fischer quietly explained: 'I had already analysed this possibility' – in a position which I thought was not possible to foresee from the opening. For this game I borrowed the Petrosian system: on the surface very peaceful, but with a large 'dose of poison'. The opening was played very quickly.

**2 c4 g6**
**3 ♘c3 ♗g7**
**4 e4 d6**
**5 ♗e2**

An innocent move, just changing the order, which gives White greater flexibility for the following moves.

**5 ... 0-0**
**6 ♘f3 e5**
**7 d5 ♘bd7**

It is clear that 7...♘h5 8 g3 would be like a 'fork hitting the water'. Better would be 7...♘a6, when Black's planned regrouping gives him less problems.

**8 ♗g5 h6**
**9 ♗h4 a6**

Necessary, if Black wants to free himself from the pin without playing ...g5.

At this moment 9...♕e8 is bad, because of 10 ♘b5.

**10 ♘d2 ♕e8**
**11 0-0 ♘h7**
**12 b4 ♘g5**

Black cannot play 12...f5 at once because of 13 exf5 gxf5 14 ♗h5. The idea of exchanging dark-squared bishops is positionally correct, but for it

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1 Tal is alluding to a well known Russian chess story. Ostap Bender, an extremely weak chess player, arrived in the small town of Vasyuki and announced that he would give a lecture followed by a simultaneous exhibition at the Cardboard-Workers' Club. By describing himself as a Grandmaster, Bender persuaded many townsfolk to pay to watch or to participate in his exhibition. On each of the thirty boards he opened 1 e4 and each game ended in his defeat. At the end of the 'exhibition', Bender rushed out into the street and escaped in a waiting boat.

Black would need too much time. The text-move looks more active.

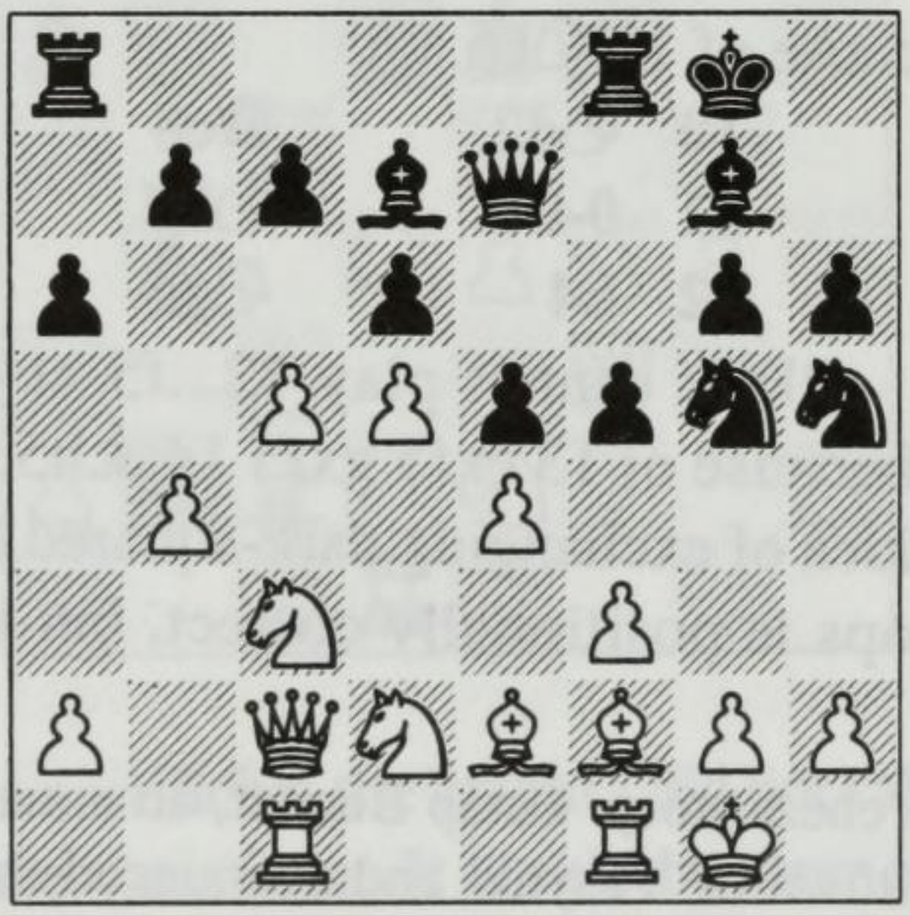
**13 f3**

13 ♗xg5 hxg5 14 g4 would also stop Black's planned reply. Of course, Black would not then get any attack but White's play would also be limited. After the text, White's bishop transfers to f2, from where it helps to attack the queenside and defend the king.

**13 ... f5**
**14 ♗f2 ♕e7**
**15 ♖c1 ♘f6**

Black rightly refuses the more usual methods; after 15...f4 it is easy to see that White's attack would be stronger than Black's. At the moment Black still threatens ...fxe4, and keeps in hand the possibility of changing his attacking plan at any time.

**16 c5 ♗d7**
**17 ♕c2 ♘h5** *(D)*




**18 b5?!**

I must admit that the decision to make this move was a difficult one, and I made it only after long calculations about other, more normal continuations. Of course, the immediate 18 cxd6 cxd6 19 ♘c4 would lead to control of the square b6 and ... checkmate: 19...fxe4 20 fxe4 ♘f4 21 ♘b6 ♘fh3+ 22 gxh3 ♘xh3+ 23 ♔g2 ♖xf2+ 24 ♖xf2 ♕g5+!.

A very tempting move was 18 c6 but then would follow 18...bxc6 19 dxc6 ♗xc6 20 ♗c4+ ♔h8 21 ♗d5 ♕d7 22 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 23 ♘d5 ♕xc2 24 ♖xc2 ♘e6 25 ♘xc7 ♖ac8 26 ♖fc1 ♘hf4 27 ♘xe6 ♘e2+ 28 ♔f1 ♘xc1.

The move played creates the first crisis in the game: because of the threats b6 and c6, Black is now forced to play energetically.

**18 ... fxe4**

Worse would be 18...dxc5 19 bxa6 b6 because White, in case he ever got into difficulty, would always have the possibility of a4-a5, not to mention the break in the centre by d6.

**19 ♘dxe4 ♘xe4**
**20 fxe4 ♘f4**
**21 c6 ♕g5**
**22 ♗f3 bxc6**

If now 22...♗g4 I would have to go into the interesting variation 23 bxa6 ♗xf3 24 ♗g3!, winning back the piece.

**23 dxc6!?**

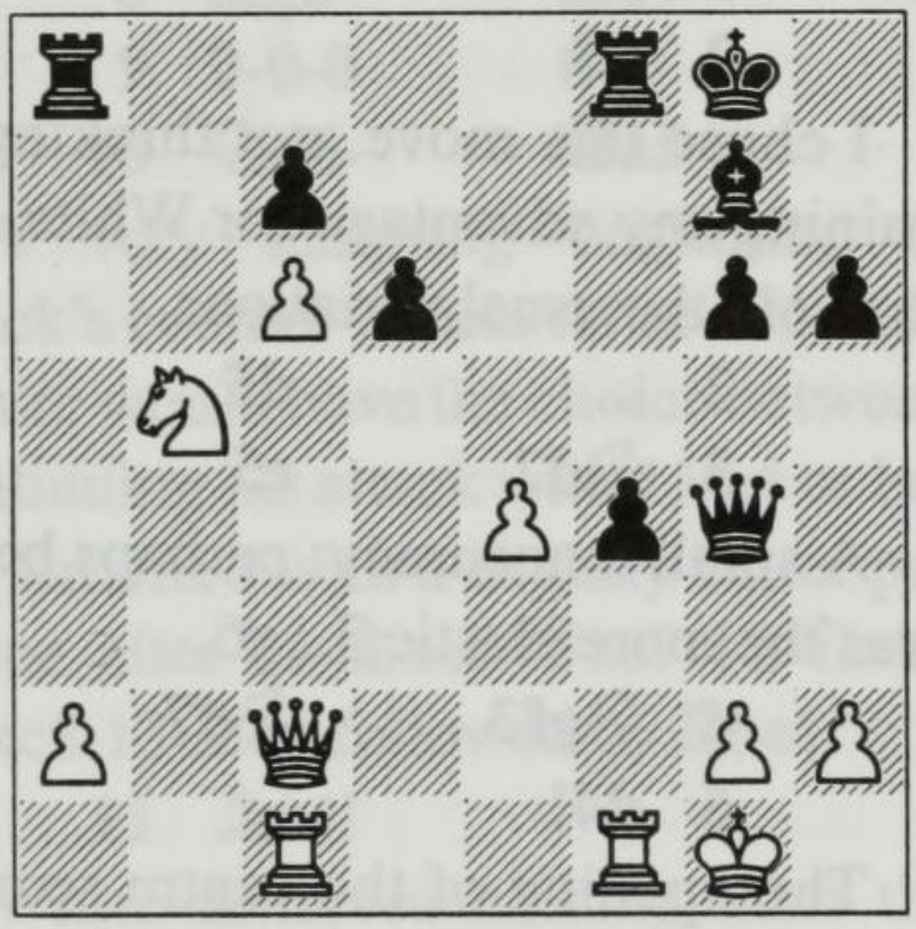
Before the game we both thought that our main aim was not to give the opponent counterplay. With the text-move, White shows that this good idea has been forgotten. I could play 23 bxc6 but after 23...♗c8! it becomes

clear that the rook on a8 and the bishop on c8, although static, marvellously defend the queenside, but on the kingside Black's limited force is ready to make a lot of unpleasantness for White. Certainly, after 23 bxc6 ♗c8 I would prefer Black. After the text a very sharp fight begins.

**23 ... ♗g4**
**24 ♗xg4 ♕xg4**
**25 ♗e3 axb5**
**26 ♗xf4**

Positionally forced.

**26 ... exf4**
**27 ♘xb5** *(D)*



*B*

In a few moves the character of the game completely changes. White gains pressure against the pawn at c7; his a-pawn is ready, at the first possibility, to advance, but Black's unemployed bishop also suddenly becomes free. The rapid change in the position seemingly depressed Fischer, who so far had played well, and with the following move he makes a mistake.

**27 ... ♖f7**

27...f3 does not look dangerous because of 28 ♘xc7 (but not 28 ♕b3+ ♔h8 29 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 30 ♕xf3 ♕g5!) 28...♗d4+ 29 ♔h1 fxg2+ 30 ♕xg2 ♕xg2+ 31 ♔xg2 ♖xa2+ 32 ♔h1 ♖xf1+ 33 ♖xf1 and after 33...♖c2 would follow 34 ♘d5. However, Black could continue at once with 27...♖ac8, gaining a few tempi compared with the game. In that case I was prepared to advance the a-pawn.

**28 ♕c4!**

Threatening ♘xc7.

**28 ... ♖c8**

Also, after 28...♔f8 29 ♖f3 followed by ♖cf1 and ♖g3, Black's position would be in very grave danger.

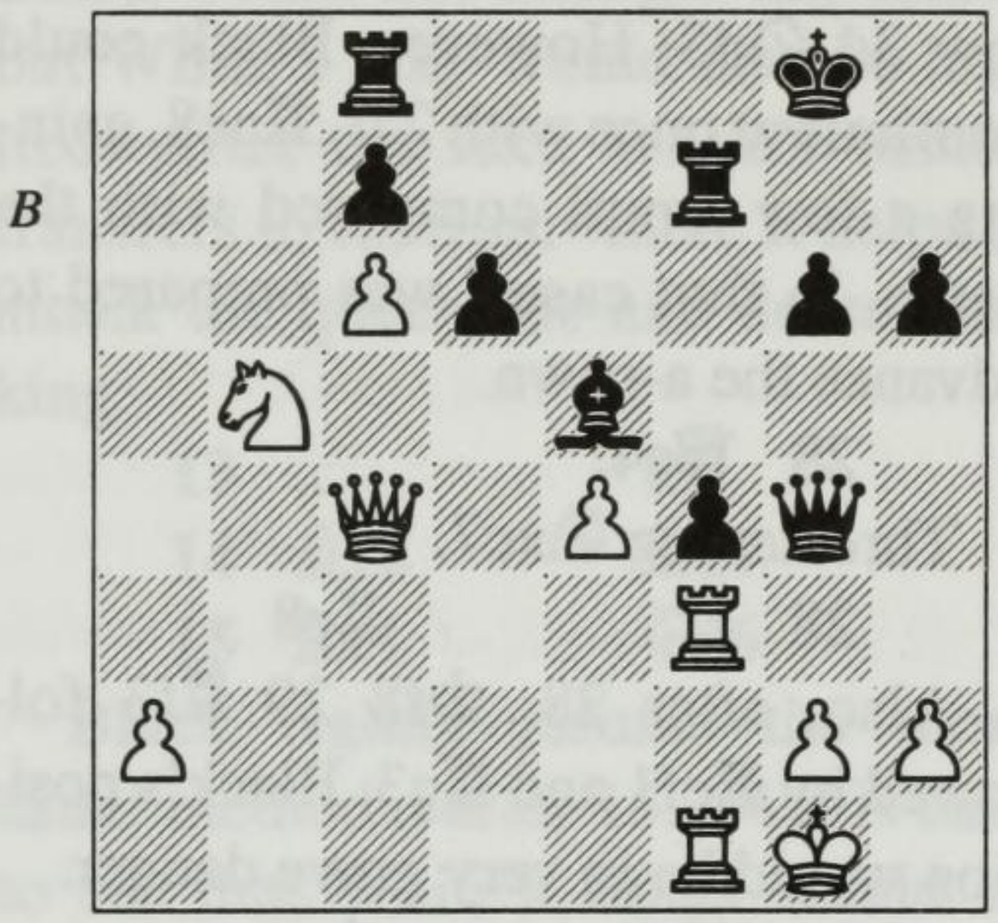
**29 ♖f3 ♗e5**
**30 ♖cf1** *(D)*

Fantastic. When I made my previous move I thought that if 29...♗e5, best would be 30 h3 ♕g5 31 ♕e6 winning the pawn. My next calculation led to the variation 31...♖b8 32 ♘xc7 ♖b2 33 ♕e8+ and it looks as though the game is over, since if 33...♖f8 White can simply take the rook. In the meantime I realised that Black has the resource 33...♔h7 (instead of ...♖f8) 34 ♕xf7+ ♔h8.

Just in the middle of this calculation somebody brought me a cup of coffee. Fischer instantly made his move 29...♗e5 and I, for the moment forgetting my calculated variation, made the text-move 'a tempo'. What a pity! I needed only to analyse two more moves 35 ♕e8+ ♔h7 36 ♕d7+ ♔h8 and 37 ♕g4!

Conclusion: drink your coffee only when it is your opponent's move!

Now White's advantage disappears and to achieve something real is very difficult.



*B*

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|---|---|---|
| **30** | **...** | **♔g7** |
| **31** | **a4** | |

The energetic 31 ♖g3 would be only a shot into thin air after 31...♕h5.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **31** | **...** | **♖a8** |
| **32** | **♔h1** | |

Preparing to open up with g3. Here Black should answer 32...g5, but Fischer seemingly did not take the threat seriously and decided not to weaken his kingside. After 32...g5 White had to decide between 33 g3 and 33 ♘d4.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **32** | **...** | **♕g5?** |
| **33** | **g3!** | **♖af8** |
| **34** | **gxf4** | **♗xf4** |

After 34...♖xf4 White's knight suddenly comes alive and wins the game: 35 ♘xc7 ♖xf3 36 ♘e6+ ♔h8 37 ♖xf3. Tougher would be 34...♕h5 35 ♘d4 ♗xd4 36 ♕xd4+ ♔h7.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **35** | **♘d4** | |

All roads lead to the square e6.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **35** | **...** | **♕h4** |
| **36** | **♖xf4** | **♖xf4** |
| **37** | **♘e6+** | **♔h8** |
| **38** | **♕d4+!** | **♖8f6** |
| **39** | **♘xf4** | **♔h7** |
| **40** | **e5** | **dxe5** |
| **41** | **♕d7+** | **1-0** |

Because of the impending mate.

Game 29

**Tal – Smyslov**

*Candidates Tournament, Bled 1959*

Caro-Kann Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **c6** |
| **2** | **d3** | |

I chose this move, not thinking of gaining any advantage for White, but to avoid the usual variations.

| | | |
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| **2** | **...** | **d5** |
| **3** | **♘d2** | **e5** |

A small inaccuracy; perhaps better was the more elastic 3...g6.

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|---|---|---|
| **4** | **♘gf3** | **♘d7** |
| **5** | **d4!** | |

The opening of the centre secures an advantage in development for White.

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|---|---|---|
| **5** | **...** | **dxe4** |
| **6** | **♘xe4** | **exd4** |

Of course 6...f5 would be worse because after 7 ♘g3 e4 8 ♘g5 Black's king's position would be weakened.

| | | |
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| **7** | **♕xd4** | |

This move gives White a slight but significant positional advantage. I was also considering 7 ♕e2 but after 7...♗b4+ 8 c3 dxc3 9 bxc3 ♗e7 10

♘d6+ ♔f8 it is not clear if White has enough compensation for the pawn, because his queen is blocking the f1-bishop's path and stops the development of his kingside. An interesting line would be, instead of 7...♗b4+, 7...♗e7 8 ♗g5 ♗xg5 9 ♘d6+ ♔f8 10 ♘xg5 ♘h6 11 ♘dxf7 but this would be followed by 11...♕a5+ and Black gains material.

7 ♗c4 ♘b6 8 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 9 ♘e5+ ♔e8 10 ♕h5+ g6 11 ♘xg6 hxg6 12 ♕xg6+ ♔d7 13 ♕f5+ leads only to a draw.

**7 ... ♘gf6**
**8 ♗g5 ♗e7**
**9 0-0-0 0-0**
**10 ♘d6 ♕a5**

A very tempting beginning to Black's counter-attack. After 10...♘d5 White would have the choice between continuing his attack with 11 h4 or being satisfied with a slightly better position after 11 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 12 ♘xc8 ♖fxc8 13 ♗c4 followed by ♖he1.

**11 ♗c4!**

White achieves nothing after the normal 11 ♔b1 ♗xd6 12 ♕xd6 because of 12...♘e4.

**11 ... b5!?**

Accepting White's kind invitation to the 'dance of death'. Better was 11...♘b6 though after 12 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 13 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 14 ♖he1 ♘bd5 15 ♕e5! White's attack is very dangerous.

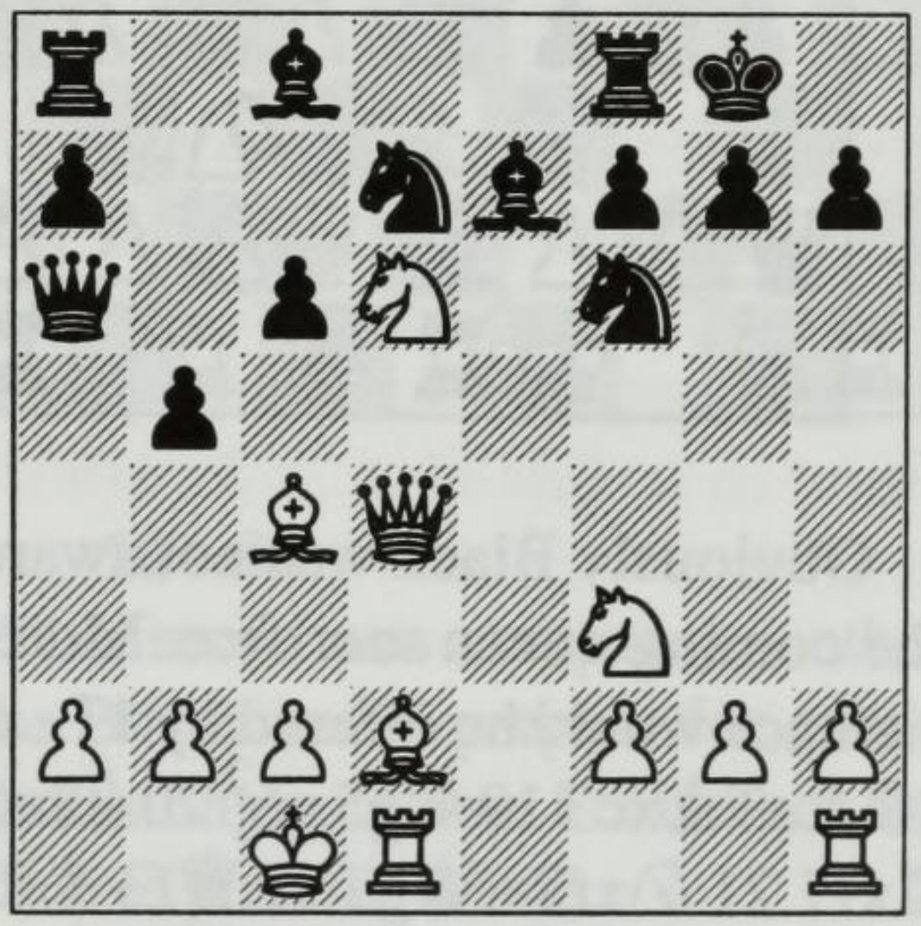
**12 ♗d2!**

A very important intermediate move, the main aim of which is to free the square g5 for the knight, or, as we shall see later, to activate the queen.

**12 ... ♕a6** *(D)*

Black decides to keep up the counter-attack against White's weakest square a2. White would only have a slightly better position after 12...♕a4 13 ♘xc8 ♖axc8 14 ♗b3 ♕xd4 15 ♘xd4.

Complicated problems would arise after 12...♕c7: there could follow 13 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 14 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 15 ♘g5+ ♔g8 16 ♖he1 ♘f8 17 ♗f4 ♕b7 18 ♗d6! and White's pressure in the centre is far too strong.



**13 ♘f5 ♗d8**

The only continuation to maintain the balance. After 13...♗c5 there could follow the pretty variation: 14 ♕h4 bxc4 15 ♗c3! ♕xa2 16 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 17 ♘h6+ ♔h8 18 ♕xf6!

**14 ♕h4 bxc4**

Rapid defeat would follow after 14...♘e5 15 ♘h6+ gxh6 16 ♗xh6 ♘g6 17 ♖xd8!

**15 ♕g5 ♘h5**

Also, after 15...g6 16 ♘h6+ ♔g7 17 ♗c3 ♕xa2 18 ♖he1 Black would be squeezed in a vice-like grip. After 15...♘e8 the simplest would be 16 ♕xd8 ♘ef6 17 ♕a5, or if in this variation 16...♕xa2 then 17 ♗c3 ♘ef6 18 ♖xd7 ♗xd7[1] 19 ♘h6+ ♔h8 20 ♕xf6!

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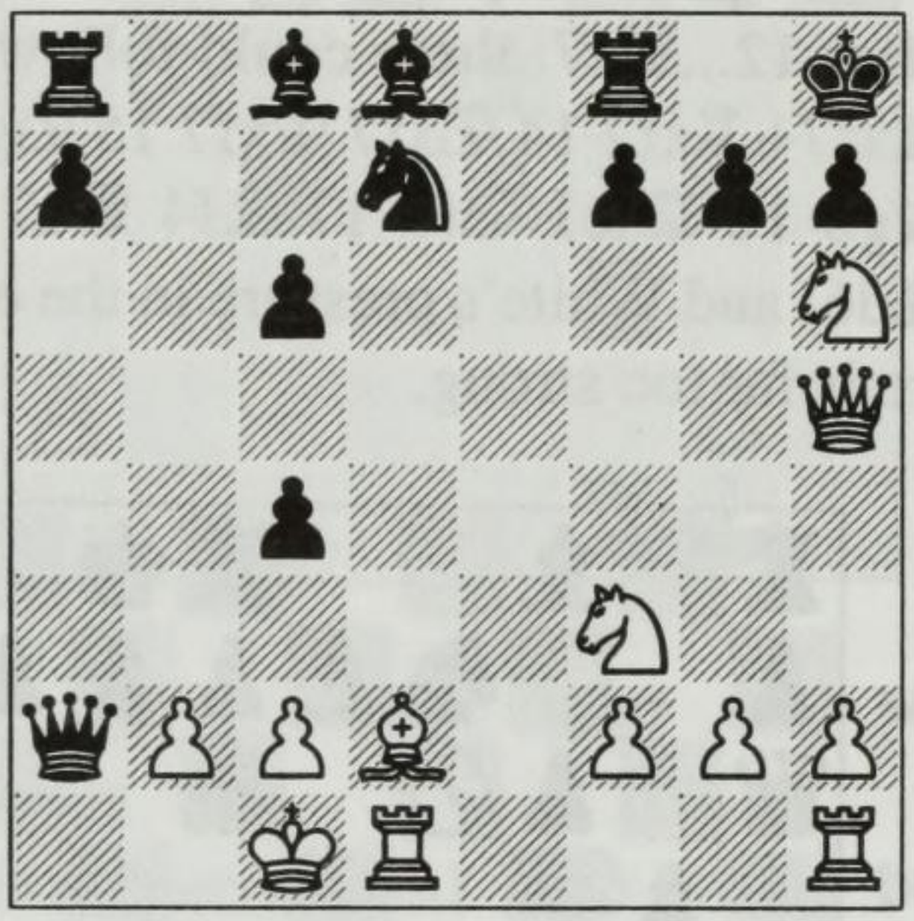
| **16** | **♘h6+** | **♔h8** | |
| **17** | **♕xh5** | **♕xa2** *(D)* | |




Obviously Black was not aware of the coming queen sacrifice. More resistance would be offered by 17...♗f6 18 ♗c3 ♗xc3 19 ♘g5 g6[2] 20 ♘hxf7+ ♖xf7 21 ♘xf7+ ♔g7 22 ♕f3 ♗f6 23 ♘d6 and Black still would not be able to complete his queenside development!

Also after 17...♘f6 18 ♕c5 ♘d7 19 ♕d6, the sun would not shine for Black.

| | | | |
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| **18** | **♗c3** | **♘f6** | |
| **19** | **♕xf7!** | | |

After this the fate of the fight is immediately decided.

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|---|---|---|---|
| **19** | **...** | **♕a1+** | |
| **20** | **♔d2** | **♖xf7** | |
| **21** | **♘xf7+** | **♔g8** | |
| **22** | **♖xa1** | **♔xf7** | |
| **23** | **♘e5+** | **♔e6** | |
| **24** | **♘xc6** | **♘e4+** | |
| **25** | **♔e3** | **♗b6+** | |
| **26** | **♗d4** | **1-0** | |

Game 30

**Tal – Gligorić**

*Candidates Tournament, Zagreb 1959*

Queen's Indian Defence

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **d4** | **♘f6** | |
| **2** | **c4** | **e6** | |

In this tournament the King's Indian Defence underwent certain crises, and even such an expert in this opening as Gligorić was subjecting it to major analysis. At the end of the tournament he again used it, but without success.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **3** | **♘f3** | **b6** | |
| **4** | **♘c3** | **♗b7** | |
| **5** | **♗g5** | **♗b4** | |

By a transposition of moves we find ourselves in a variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defence where the position, in the light of the most recent games, slightly favours White. Of this variation I should have been careful, because Gligorić was a witness to my

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1 The original text gave 19 ♕xf6, but presumably a move was missed out.

2 19...♗xb2+ looks much better as if 20 ♔xb2, then 20...gxh6 21 ♕xh6 ♕b5+ and 22...♕f5. If 20 ♔b1, then 20...g6 and Black has the advantage.

game with Dückstein in the Zurich international tournament, where White got the better of it. Having burned my bridges as to the choice of opening I was forced to employ the same continuation as in the game against Dückstein.

**6 e3 h6**
**7 ♗h4 g5**

International Master Konstantinopolsky, who annotated this game in the tournament bulletin, preferred 7...♗xc3+ 8 bxc3 ♕e7 followed by ...d6, ...♘bd7 and ...0-0-0. I think that the text-move is stronger, since after 8...♕e7 White would continue 9 ♘d2 and the knight would control the very important square e4.

**8 ♗g3 ♘e4**
**9 ♕c2 ♗xc3+**
**10 bxc3 d6**
**11 ♗d3 ♘xg3!**

In Keres-Taimanov, 22nd USSR Championship, Black played 11...f5 with the idea of attacking on the kingside, but after 12 d5 not only did the attack fail, but Black's position became untenable owing to his bad pawn structure. With the text-move Black maintains his pawn structure.

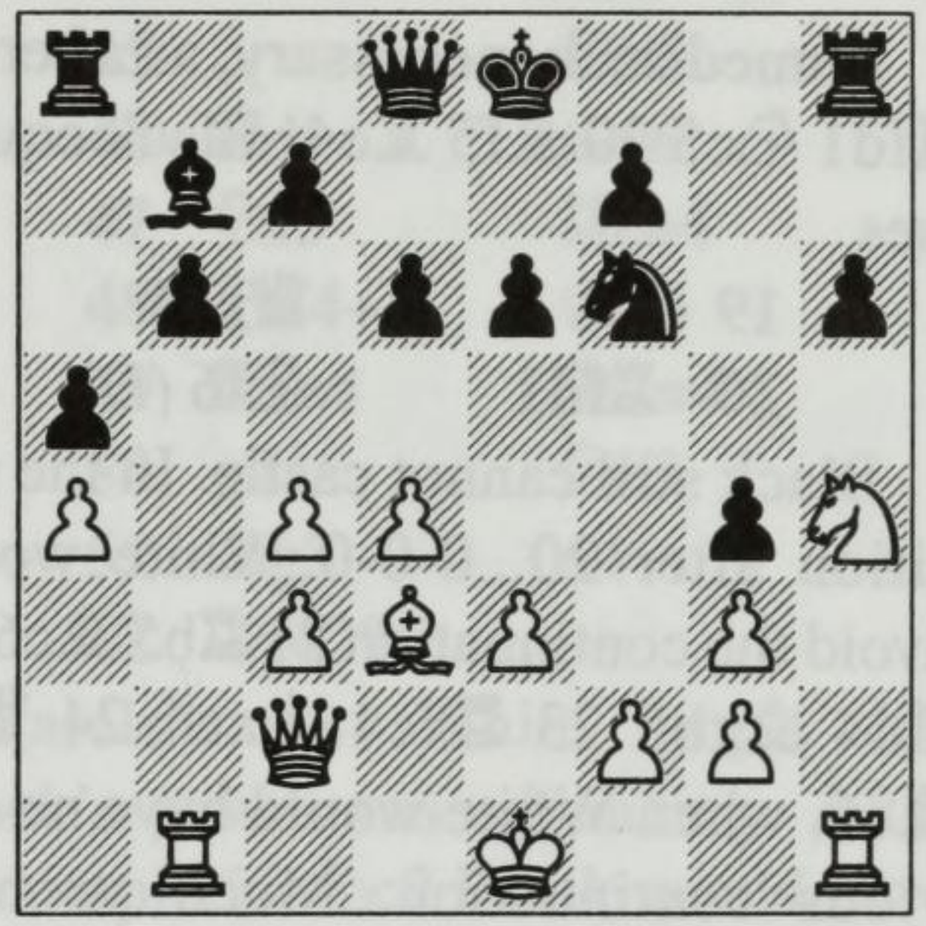
**12 hxg3 ♘d7**
**13 a4**

More natural would be 13 ♗e4 but after 13...♗xe4 14 ♕xe4 ♘f6 15 ♕c6+ ♔e7 the 'dangerous' position of Black's king is only illusory. Black's next move is positionally forced.

**13 ... a5**
**14 ♖b1 g4!**

It is interesting that Black has no better move. If he moves his queen to enable queenside castling, then after ♗e4 and the exchange of bishops, the rook on b1 would be ideally placed and White would follow up with c5. The move ...♘f6 is impossible at the moment, because of ♘xg5.

**15 ♘h4 ♘f6** *(D)*




**16 d5**

This move was necessary – otherwise Black would prepare for queenside castling, and then I could not find an active plan for White.

**16 ... ♕e7**

If Black takes the pawn on d5, then all White's pieces would become very dangerous.

**17 0-0**

Weaker would be 17 dxe6 ♕xe6 18 ♗f5 ♗e4.

**17 ... ♘d7**

After this logical move White takes over the initiative. Very tempting was the exchange sacrifice 17...0-0-0 18 dxe6 fxe6 19 ♘g6 ♕g7 20 ♘xh8

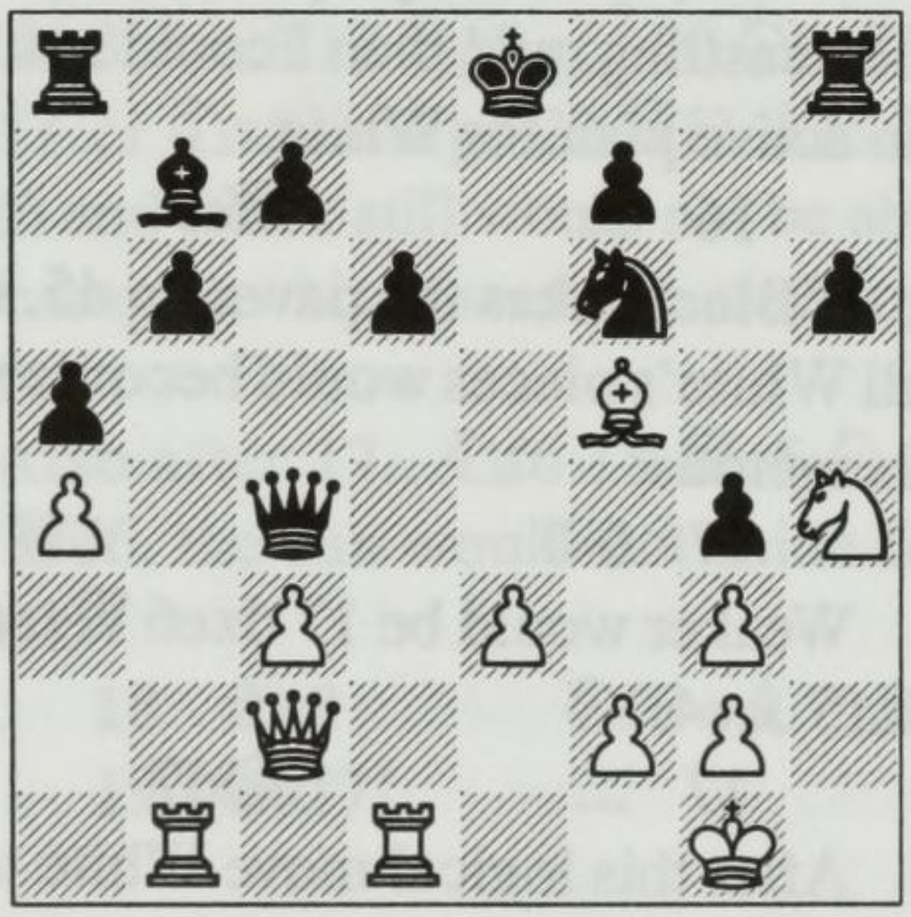
♖xh8: in this position White would play 21 c5 activating his pieces. Of course the play would become very interesting, but Black's chances would not be bad. To be truthful I must say that I would not have given up my active knight on h4 for the passive rook, but would have played the simple 18 e4.

**18 dxe6 ♕xe6**
**19 ♗f5!**

Immediately necessary, as after 19 ♖fd1 ♘c5 20 ♗f5 ♗e4! Black equalises.

**19 ... ♕xc4**
**20 ♖fd1 ♘f6** *(D)*

Black still cannot castle. In the position after 20...0-0-0 White would avoid the continuation 21 ♖b5 ♗c6 22 ♖d4 ♗xb5 23 ♖xc4 ♗xc4 24 ♕e4 ♗e6, when White would have no obvious continuation. Much stronger would be 21 ♖d4 ♕c5 22 ♖b5 ♕a3 23 ♗xg4 and White has an excellent position.



*W*

**21 ♖d4 ♕c6**
**22 ♗e6!**

The aim of this move is to force the rook to g8, where it will become the object of White's attack. Black cannot take the bishop because of 22 ♕g6+ ♔d7 23 ♕g7+! There is also the threat of winning the queen by 23 ♖c4. After 22...d5 I would have been greatly tempted to continue with 23 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 24 ♕g6+ and it is easy to see that White's attack is very dangerous. How to cope with all White's threats? Gligorić finds the best answer.

**22 ... ♖g8**

Now, after 23 ♖c4 fxe6 24 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 Black would have rook, bishop and pawn for queen.

**23 ♗c4 ♔f8**

If 23...0-0-0 then 24 ♗b5 ♕c5 25 ♘f5 ♔b8 26 ♘e7 ♖g5 27 ♖c4 ♕e5 28 ♘c6+ and Black is forced to give up his best defensive piece[1].

Now we see how exposed Black's position is by the fact that he is forced to play 22...♖g8. After the text-move White regains the pawn and keeps his positional advantage.

**24 ♗b5 ♕c5**
**25 ♖c4 ♕e5**
**26 ♖xc7 ♗e4**
**27 ♗d3 d5**
**28 ♖c6 ♖b8**

If White takes the pawn on b6 then after the exchange of rooks his initiative would slowly disappear. At the

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1 Actually, this seems to be fine for Black, for example 28...♗xc6 29 ♗xc6 ♕e6 (threat 30...♖c5) 30 ♕d3 ♘d7 31 ♖e4 ♘c5! with some advantage for Black.

moment White's knight appears to be inactive but it has great potential. With his next move White decides to open up the position even more.

**29 c4 ♖g5**

After 29...dxc4 30 ♖xc4 ♗xd3 31 ♕xd3 Black would have difficulty in preventing ♘f5.

**30 c5**

White still cannot get the knight into play, but now follows a new threat and White creates a dangerous passed pawn. Konstantinopolsky's advice to continue 30...bxc5 must be a blunder, for White would not play 31 ♕xc5+ but first exchange rooks at b8 and then collect the knight.

**30 ... d4**
**31 exd4 ♕xd4**
**32 ♗xe4 ♕xe4**
**33 cxb6 ♕xc2**
**34 ♖xc2 ♘d7**
**35 b7 ♘c5**
**36 ♖b5**

It is possible that 36 f4 was even stronger, but after a tiring fight and being in time-trouble I did not want to go into the complications which would arise after 36 f4 ♖d5 37 ♖b5 ♖d1+. Now 38 ♔h2 ♘xb7 39 ♖c7 ♖e8 40 ♖bxb7 is dangerous due to 40...♖ee1, e.g. 41 ♖c8+ ♔g7 42 ♘f5+ ♔h7 43 ♖xf7+ ♔g6 44 ♖g7+ ♔h5. This is not good enough, and I did not like 38 ♔f2. That is why I decided that two pawns were enough to win this game.

**36 ... ♘xb7**
**37 ♖cb2 ♖xb5**
**38 ♖xb5 ♔e7**
**39 ♘f5+**

At last the knight becomes active.

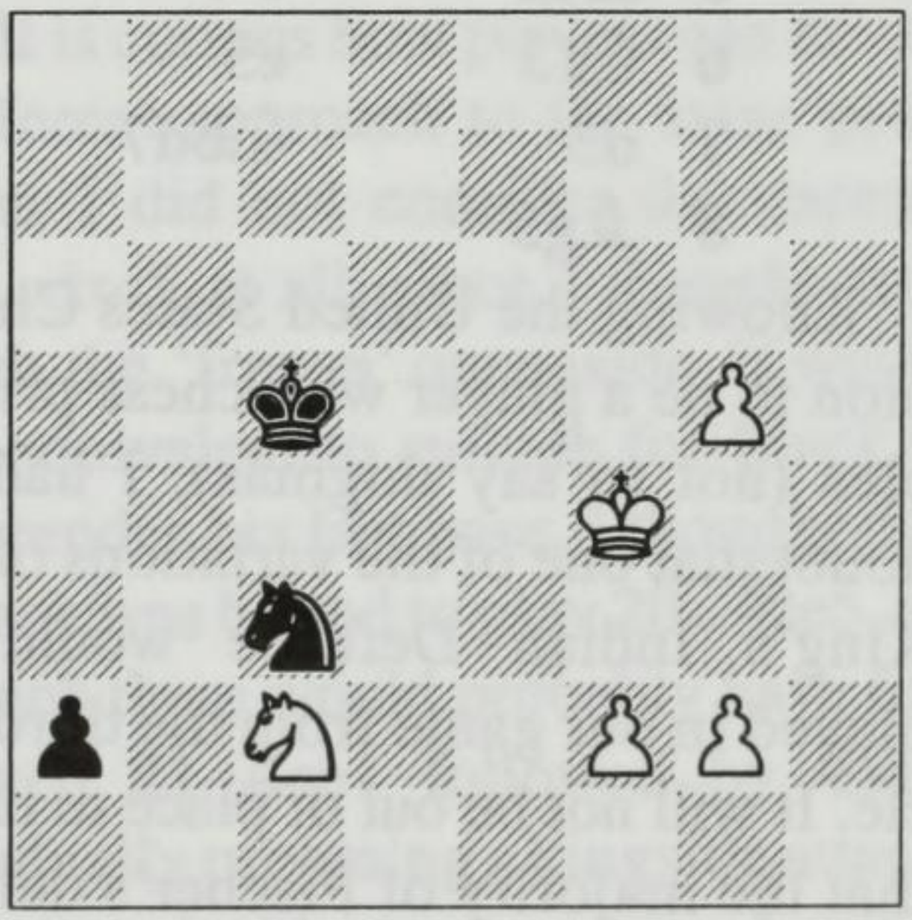
**39 ... ♔d7**
**40 ♘xh6 ♔c7**
**41 ♘xf7 ♖f8**
**42 ♘h6 ♖d8**
**43 ♖g5 ♖d1+**
**44 ♔h2 ♖a1**
**45 ♖xg4**

The sealed move.

**45 ... ♘c5**
**46 ♖c4 ♔c6**
**47 ♘f5 ♖xa4**
**48 ♘d4+ ♔b6**
**49 ♖xa4 ♘xa4**
**50 g4 ♘c3**
**51 ♔g3 a4**
**52 ♔f4??**

Carelessness: White forgot that Black's pawn was advancing. After the simple 52 ♘c2 Black would have to resign.

**52 ... a3**
**53 ♘c2 a2**
**54 g5 ♔c5** *(D)*




**55 g6**

The only move to win for White.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **55** | **...** | **♔c4** |
| **56** | **g7** | **♘d5+** |
| **57** | **♔g5** | **♘e7** |
| **58** | **f4** | **♔c3** |
| **59** | **♘a1** | **♔b2** |
| **60** | **f5** | **♔xa1** |
| **61** | **f6** | **♔b1** |
| **62** | **fxe7** | **a1♕** |
| **63** | **e8♕** | |

Now we see the idea of move 57 – Black's queen cannot take the pawn because of 64 ♕g6+.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **63** | **...** | **♕a5+** |
| **64** | **♔h6** | **1-0** |

Game 31

**Tal – Fischer**

*Candidates Tournament, Zagreb 1959*

King's Indian Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **d4** | **♘f6** |
| **2** | **c4** | **g6** |
| **3** | **♘c3** | **♗g7** |
| **4** | **e4** | **d6** |
| **5** | **♗e2** | **0-0** |
| **6** | **♘f3** | **e5** |
| **7** | **d5** | **♘bd7** |
| **8** | **♗g5** | |

Knowing the United States Champion to be a player with chess principles (not to say dogmas), I had no doubt that one of the variations of the King's Indian Defence would be played in our game from the third cycle. It will not be out of place to recall that the majority of Fischer's defeats in the Candidates Tournament were the result of him repeating the same, and to a considerable extent, inferior opening systems. Of course, one cannot place an opening such as the King's Indian Defence in such a category, but from the results of this tournament it can be concluded that Grandmaster Petrosian, possibly without himself realising it, has placed King's Indian players in a very difficult position. If I remember correctly, he first adopted this system in his game with Suetin from the 25th USSR Championship, when he spoke very modestly about its value, saying that its main advantage was that Black did not obtain active play. Many games have now been played with this system. Black indeed does not obtain active play, but White does, and what play!

It seems to me that Black's last move is inaccurate: after 7...♘a6 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4 ♕e8 10 ♘d2 ♘h7 White must either allow Black to advance ...f5 without great loss of time, or else play g4, as occurred in the game Tal-Vasiukov (USSR Peoples' Spartakiad), which at least gives Black some compensation.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **8** | **...** | **h6** |
| **9** | **♗h4** | **a6** |

The continuation 9...g5 10 ♗g3 ♘h5 which, incidentally, occurred in the game Smyslov-Benko from the third cycle, appears to be an overstrong measure, since sooner or later one of the white knights establishes itself on the obligingly created post at f5. Besides, it is not in the style of the youthful but cautious American

Grandmaster to decide on such a continuation without extreme necessity.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **10** | **0-0** | **♕e8** |
| **11** | **♘d2** | **♘h7** |
| **12** | **b4** | **♗f6** |

12...f5 would clearly be a mistake because of 13 exf5 when Black is forced to take with his rook (13...gxf5 14 ♗h5). In our game from the first cycle 12...♘g5 was played, and then Black advanced ...f5, but did not obtain an attack, since his knight turned out to be 'under the feet' of the storming pawns.

To be fair, it should be mentioned that White's play was still further improved by the author of the system, Petrosian, in his game with Gligorić from the final round.

In the present game Fischer chooses the most dogmatic, but also very slow, continuation, involving the exchange of the dark-squared bishops. This continuation, I recall, was recommended by Grandmaster Averbakh in an article devoted to the tournament in Portorož, and one must suppose, for this reason, that it was familiar to me. After the game it was revealed that the young American had spent 10 hours analysing this variation. Alas, this did not improve the variation, but it did leave Fischer tired.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **13** | **♗xf6** | **♘hxf6** |
| **14** | **♘b3** | **♕e7** |
| **15** | **♕d2** | **♔h7** |
| **16** | **♕e3** | |

16 ♖ac1 was possibly more accurate, for the moment not determining the position of the queen. Black is unable, without considerable positional sacrifices, to prevent the breakthrough by c5.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **16** | **...** | **♘g8!** |

By defending his queen, Black assures himself of future counterplay based on the e5-square.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **17** | **c5** | **f5** |
| **18** | **exf5** | **gxf5** |
| **19** | **f4** | **exf4** |
| **20** | **♕xf4** *(D)* | |

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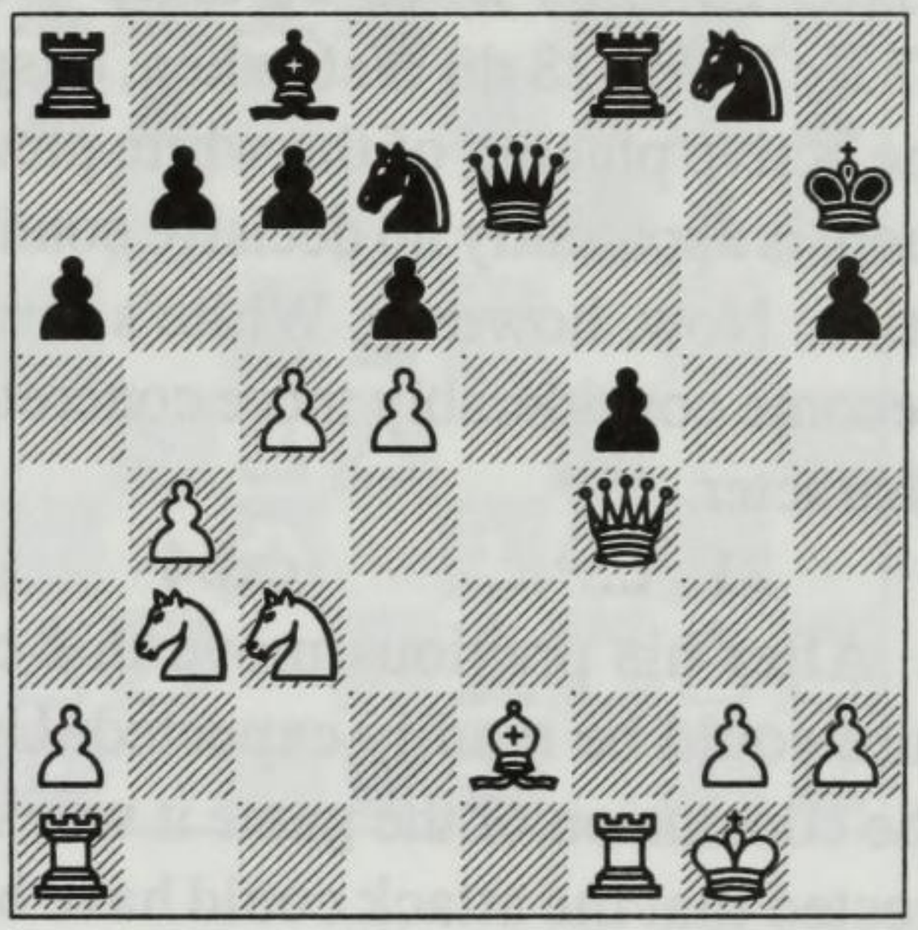


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **20** | **...** | **dxc5** |

It is curious how players can have a different approach to the same position. I did not consider the capture 20...dxc5 at all, since I thought that, with the 'frozen' queenside, it would be equivalent to suicide for Black to surrender his last base. I thought that Black was bound to play 20...♘e5, on which there would probably have followed 21 ♖ae1 followed by ♘d4, gradually preparing a kingside attack. Fischer, in his turn, captured on c5 without hesitation, evidently thinking

that White had overlooked this, and that, with an extra pawn, he would have no difficulty in defending himself. I thought for a long time over my next move, which apparently further convinced Fischer of the correctness of his judgement.

**21 ♗d3!**

White spent his time deciding between the continuation in the game and the variation 21 bxc5 ♘xc5 22 ♖ac1 ♗d7! 23 ♕xc7 ♖ac8 24 ♕f4 ♘xb3 25 axb3 ♖xc3 26 ♖xc3 ♕xe2 27 ♖c7 ♕e7 28 d6 ♕e6 when, despite the active placing of the white pieces, there is apparently no decisive continuation. Now, however, White's threats become considerably more concrete in character.

**21 ... cxb4**

After his previous move this capture could be readily expected. Upon the conclusion of the game it was suggested that the attack could have been beaten back by 21...♕g7. The fact that this is not quite so, is illustrated by the following line: 21...♕g7 22 ♗xf5+ ♔h8 23 ♘e4 ♘e5 24 ♘g3 ♘e7 25 ♖ae1 and if 25...♗xf5 then 26 ♕xe5 while on 25...♘d3, 26 ♖xe7 is possible.

**22 ♖ae1 ♕f6**

This is the decisive error. 22...♕d6 was better, when play would probably have continued as follows: 23 ♗xf5+ ♔h8 24 ♕d4+ ♕f6 25 ♕xb4 ♕b6+ 26 ♕d4+ ♕xd4+ 27 ♘xd4 with a considerable positional advantage for White. Now events develop by force.

**23 ♖e6 ♕xc3**
**24 ♗xf5+ ♖xf5**
**25 ♕xf5+ ♔h8**
**26 ♖f3 ♕b2**

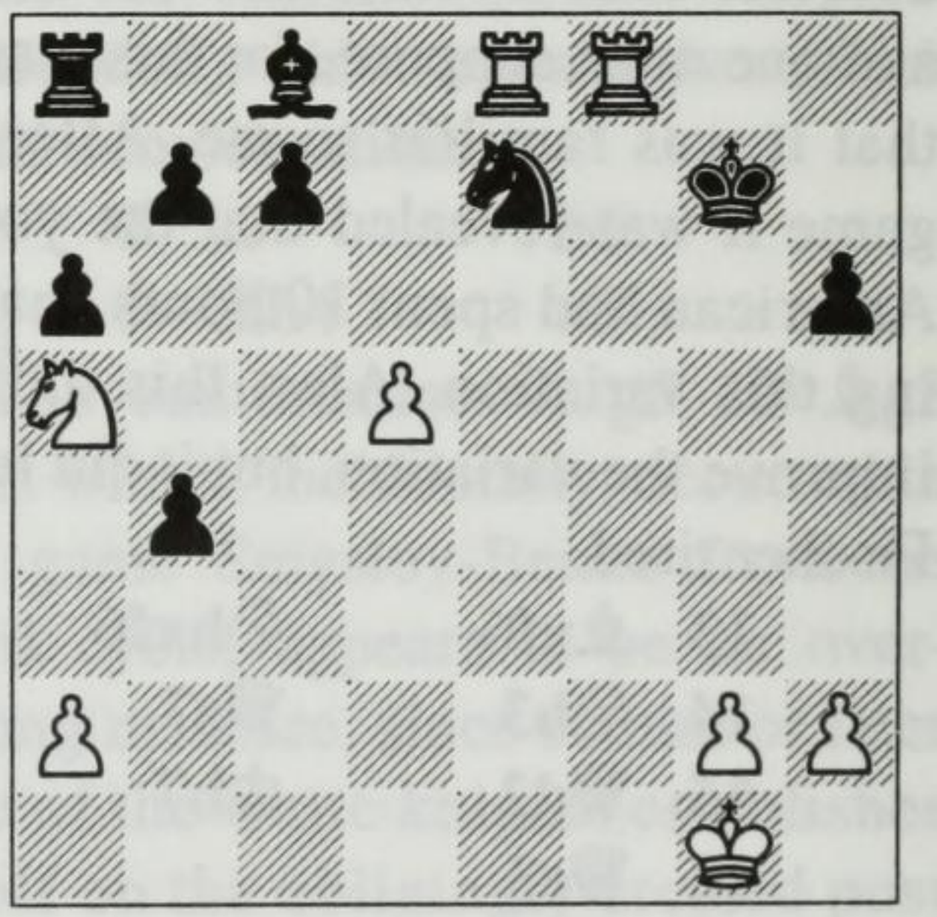
Black has no way of hindering the storm by the heavy pieces. A player whose main concern was for the number of moves played would no doubt have preferred 26...♘df6 27 ♖xc3 bxc3 with good chances of adjourning the game. However, the result would hardly have changed. On 26...♕g7 27 ♖g3 ♕h7 (or 27...♕f8 28 ♕xf8 ♘xf8 29 ♖e8) the immediate 28 ♖e8! is decisive.

**27 ♖e8 ♘f6**
**28 ♕xf6+ ♕xf6**
**29 ♖xf6 ♔g7**
**30 ♖ff8**

The simple 30 ♖f3 was also possible, but White could not resist the temptation to put his opponent into an unusual zugzwang.

**30 ... ♘e7**
**31 ♘a5** *(D)*

*B*



An amusing position: Black's king,

knight and bishop have no moves, while he cannot advance his c-pawn as White gets a passed pawn, nor his b-pawn in view of ♘c6. On 31...♖a7 White does not have to capture on c8, but can win a piece by simply moving his rook away from f8.

**31 ... h5**
**32 h4**

This not only demonstrates the hopelessness of Black's position, but also creates a mating net.

**32 ... ♖b8**
**33 ♘c4 b5**
**34 ♘e5 1-0**

Game 32

**Tal – Johannessen**

*Riga 1959*

Slav Defence

**1 d4 ♘f6**
**2 c4 c6**
**3 ♘c3 d5**
**4 ♘f3 g6**

Schlechter's Defence, which Black uses in this game, leads to a fairly safe, but not very promising game in which Black has few chances of creating active counterplay. Johannessen is a chess master who loves having the initiative, and for this reason it is difficult to agree with his choice of defence.

**5 ♗f4**

It would be more accurate to first exchange pawns by 5 cxd5 cxd5 and only then play ♗f4 but I did not like to allow Black's knight to come to c6.

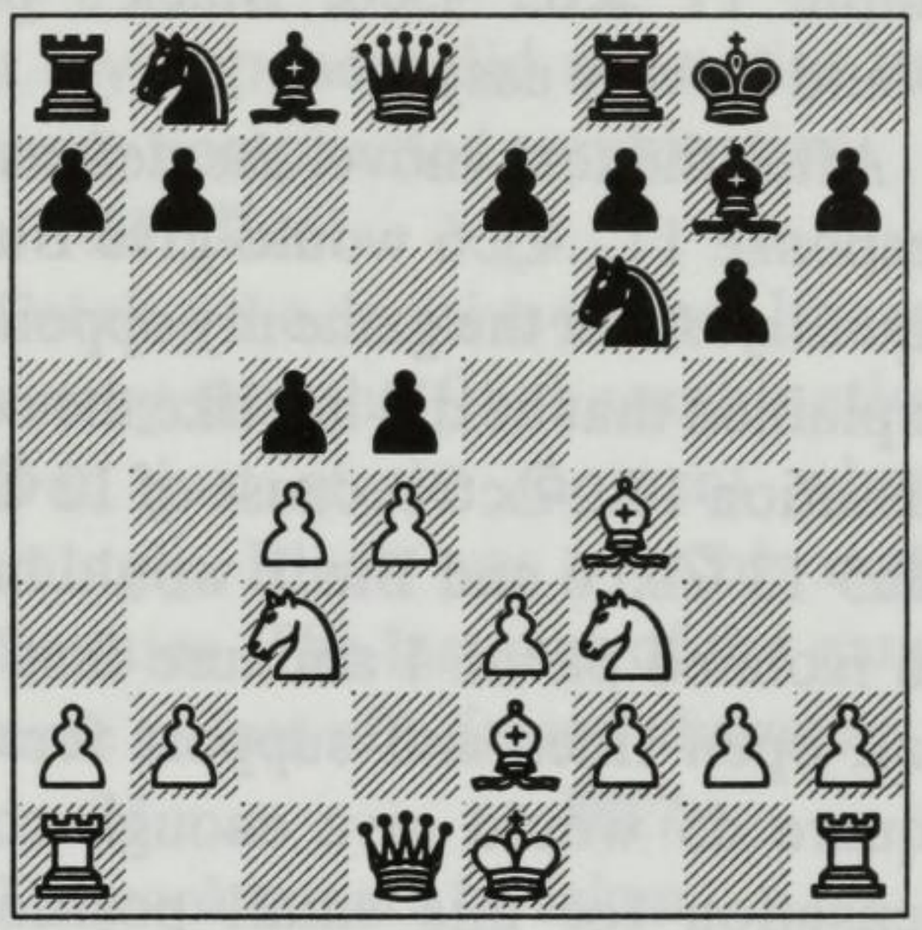
**5 ... ♗g7**

In case of 5...dxc4 my reply would be 6 e3 ♘d5 7 ♗e5 f6 8 ♗xb8 ♖xb8 and 9 ♗xc4 with advantage for White, as in the game Geller-Barcza, Budapest 1952.

**6 e3 0-0**
**7 ♗e2**

Inaccurate. To stop Black's breakthrough I should first play 7 ♖c1.

**7 ... c5!** *(D)*



Usually in this variation the move ...c5 becomes an unfulfilled dream. Here, by contrast, Black can free himself with gain of tempo because of White's unnecessary move 7 ♗e2.

**8 dxc5 ♕a5**
**9 0-0**

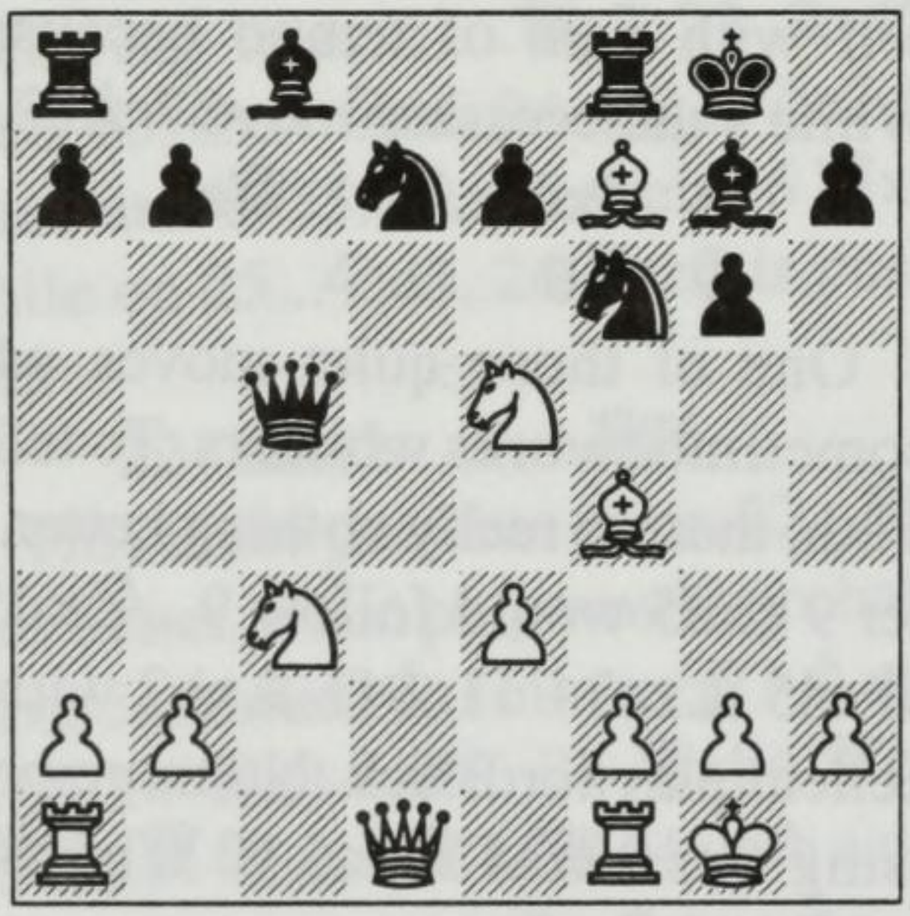
One of those quiet moves which sometimes works wonders. To tell the truth, there is really nothing better. After 9 cxd5 would follow 9...♘xd5 10 ♕xd5 ♗xc3+ 11 ♔f1 ♗xb2 with excellent play for Black. No more promising was 9 ♕a4 ♕xc5 10 ♕b5 ♕xb5 11 ♘xb5 ♘a6.

**9 ... dxc4**
**10 ♗xc4 ♕xc5**
**11 ♘e5**

This looks a bit peculiar. White is not yet ready to sacrifice on f7. Indeed, if in this position it were White's move the sacrifice would not work. However, Black is to play and with his next move he badly spoils his own position. To be just, I have to say that after any normal continuation, for example 11 ♗b3 ♘c6, Black's play would be very easy.

After the text-move, the defensive response 11...♘c6 would give Black equality. After the game my opponent explained that he did not like the continuation 11...♘c6 because of 12 ♘a4 ♕a5 13 ♘xc6 and Black would have an isolated pawn. I am sure that the half-open lines and support for the square d5 would give enough compensation for this small positional weakness.

**11 ... ♘bd7**
**12 ♗xf7+** *(D)*



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I think sacrifices like this do not need deep calculation: it is enough to see the position to be sure that the sacrifice is correct. However – what sort of sacrifice is it? Black gets two pieces for the rook and pawn. According to all text book calculation lists he has gained half a pawn, but for that ... look what happens.

**12 ... ♖xf7**
**13 ♘xf7 ♔xf7**
**14 ♕b3+ ♔f8**
**15 ♖ac1**

White's pieces take up ideal positions, while Black's queenside pieces are still sleeping. The rook at a8 and bishop at c8 will be passive for a long time, and already there is the threat of 16 ♘b5 ♕b6 17 ♘c7 followed by ♘e6+. Also, it is easy to see that on move 14 Black could not play ...e6, because then 15 ♘b5 would be even stronger.

**15 ... a6**

Preventing the afore-mentioned threat, but White's knight is looking at both sides of the board. A better defence would be 15...♕b6 and if 16 ♘b5, then 16...♘e8 (Keres' idea). However, White is then ready to play the simple 16 ♕c4, keeping much the better position.

**16 ♖fd1**

Now the threat is 17 ♘d5 with the same ideas. Trying to offer the exchange of queens by 16...♕b6 would fail to 17 ♕a3, but not 17 ♕xb6 ♘xb6 18 ♖d8+ ♔f7 when Black can survive.

**16 ... ♕a5**

Now Black needs only one more move, ...♘c5, and everything would be in order. That is why ...

**17 ♕c4! ♕f5**

Black cannot see any way to develop his pieces. 17...♘c5 would be bad because of 18 b4. If 17...♘b6, then 18 ♖d8+ is decisive. The same would follow after the exchange 17...♘e5, and finally Black cannot play 17...b5 because of 18 ♕c6. The text-move does not promise much either, but in this position good advice is already as valuable as gold dust.

**18 h3**

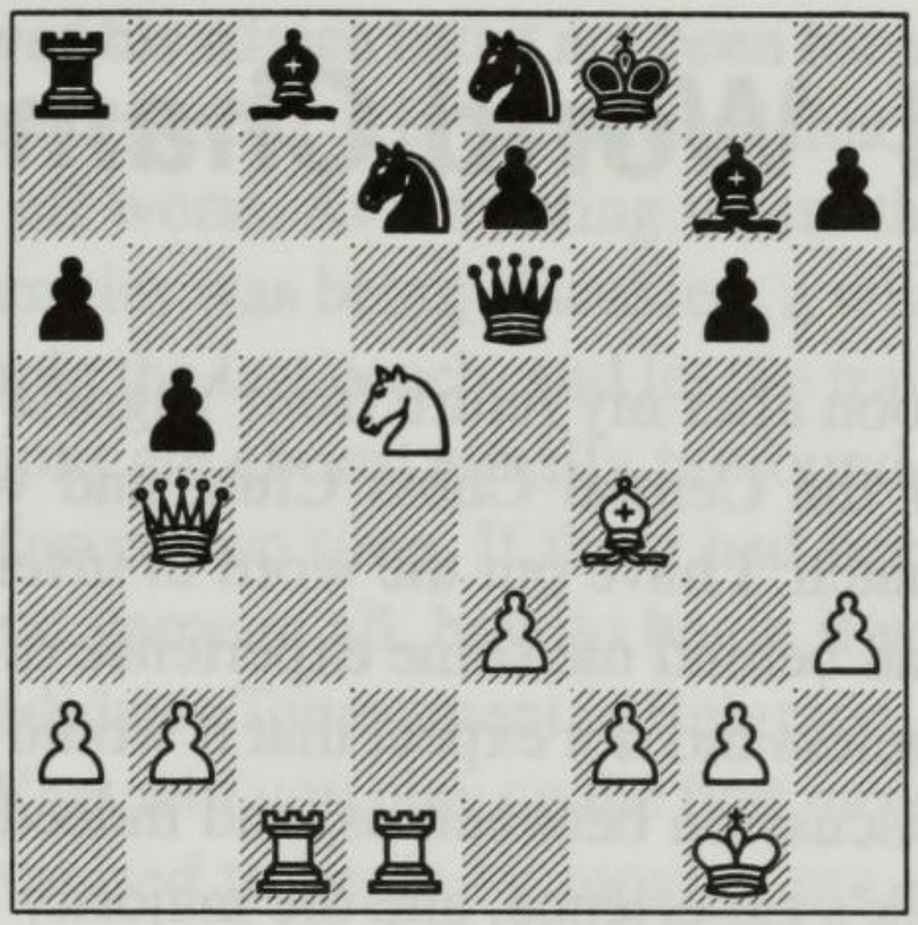
It is possible that this simple move is the best way of emphasising White's tremendous advantage. Now there is also the threat of g4, and the reply 18...h5 would weaken Black's kingside too much. Black again tries to regroup his forces.

**18 ... ♘e8**

**19 ♘d5 ♕e6**

If 19...e5, then 20 ♕b4+.

**20 ♕b4 b5** *(D)*




Grandmaster Keres suggested the move 20...♗e5, but after 21 ♖c4 Black's position is hopeless, because the e7-square is 'collapsing'. In making the text-move Black seemingly was quite 'hopeful', intending to play 21...♗b7; after 21 ♘c7 ♘xc7 22 ♖xc7 ♔f7 there are no real threats. I must admit that my opponent did not notice the not very complicated combination.

**21 ♖c6!**

Gaining the decisive tempo. It is interesting that the final combination arrived just at the moment when, seemingly, Black was over his main difficulties. The last part of the game is more or less of a forced character.

**21 ... ♕f7**

The rook cannot be taken.

**22 ♘c7 ♘xc7**

**23 ♖xc7 ♕e6**

**24 ♖dc1 ♘b6**

Also hopeless was 24...♘e5 25 ♕e4.

**25 ♖xe7 ♘d5**

**26 ♖xe6+ ♘xb4**

**27 ♗d6+ 1-0**

At the best Black loses 'only' a piece. It is interesting to mention that Black's queen's bishop and rook did not make a single move.

# 4 World Champion

Soon after my return from Yugoslavia, I met Botvinnik in the Grandmaster room of the Central Chess Club, and we began 'discussing' the conditions for the match. I have put the word in inverted commas, because at that time, although I had behind me some experience of match play (against Saigin in 1954), I nevertheless did not expect that it would all be taken so seriously. There was in fact no discussion between us, and indeed, there could not be; I fully relied on Botvinnik's experience, and the majority of the details of our meeting have slipped my memory. I recall just one point: the World Champion persistently argued the necessity for having two envelopes when a game was adjourned, so that the loss of one (and such a thing can happen even in a World Championship Match) would not be so serious.

Two envelopes – that means two scoresheets, on each of which one has to write down a secret move (preferably the same one on each sheet), and since at that time (and even now) I could not cope with carbon paper, the whole procedure of the sealed move seemed to me to be made doubly crucial (perhaps because of this, in our first match I had only to fill in the envelopes – it was always Botvinnik who sealed).

It is both pleasant and complicated to recall the 1960 match. Why it is pleasant, the reader will, of course, realise perfectly well; the difficulty lies in the fact that all that I can say concerning it has evidently been written in my book on the match. Nowadays I sometimes turn over the pages of this book, and try to establish to what extent it was written by a youthful hand (to express it somewhat delicately). At any rate, my next book about a match for the World Championship will be more 'adult'.

I have to admit to the reader that my frame of mind prior to the first game was not particularly optimistic; there was good reason for this. The fact was that in the preceding years I had developed the 'nice' habit of beginning a tournament with a loss. The 25th USSR Championship, the International Tournament in Zurich, the USSR Peoples' Spartakiad, and finally the Candidates Tournament – I think that this list is quite sufficient. Besides, this had become so ingrained in me, that the result of the first game did not come as a surprise either to me, to my opponent, who turned up for the game to receive his 'due' point, or to my friends, who began listening to chess reports and buying bulletins only after the second round.

One of my friends (I don't know whether he was being serious) suggested that I should simply not turn up for the start of the match, but should join in at the

second game. Who knows, I might have followed his advice had it not been for an old story which accidentally impressed itself on my mind. It is well known that in train crashes it is the rear coaches that come off worst. At a meeting where the question of eliminating the cause of such calamities was being discussed, a wise old signal operator suggested: let's just uncouple the last coach, and let the train go without it. As you can see, these two solutions are almost equally profound..

No doubt because of this, we arrived in Moscow on time. If there had been some discussion as to whether to begin the first game at all, how to begin it we knew beforehand. At the conclusion of the Candidates Tournament in Belgrade, a Yugoslav radio commentator had asked me: 'What will you play on the first move of your first game with Botvinnik?' I then promised to begin by moving my e-pawn, and, of course, I did not want to break my word for no special reason; besides, the move 1 e4 is not bad in itself.

The match began very well for me. Koblents and I had guessed which opening variation the World Champion would choose, and although Botvinnik had prepared an innovation, I was well familiar with the character of the position. I won after a short, sharp skirmish. After the seventh game my lead had increased to three points, but the chess content of our games in no way corresponded to the results. The positional advantage gained by Botvinnik as a result of deep, well thought-out play, was in many cases beyond dispute, and only time-trouble errors, and, to a greater extent, excessive caution in time-trouble, told on the result. Sensing this disparity, I played the eighth game, I would say, excessively recklessly: if I was going to be punished it would serve me right, while if chess injustice was to triumph once again – well, as compensation I would have one more point.

At first the eighth game developed along familiar lines. By move 15 Botvinnik had a positional advantage, by move 20 an extra pawn, and by move 25 both the one and the other. However, by move 30 the position had become significantly sharper. After a further few inaccurate moves on White's part, the following position was reached (*see diagram overleaf*).

Amazed by his good fortune, Black confidently made what he thought was the winning move **34...♖bc8**. There was no time to be amazed for long, since I had only some thirteen minutes remaining on my clock, and Botvinnik three. There followed at rapid speed **35 ♘a5 ♗xe2 36 ♖xe2 ♘xc3 37 ♖xc3**. This already came as something of a surprise to me, but it wasn't yet time to become despondent. **37...♖xc3 38 ♘xb7 ♖exe3**. Having accurately (as I then thought) worked out a forced eight-move variation, after **39 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 40 ♘xd6 ♖d3** I went for a smoke behind the stage, (during the first match I was an amateur smoker, so to

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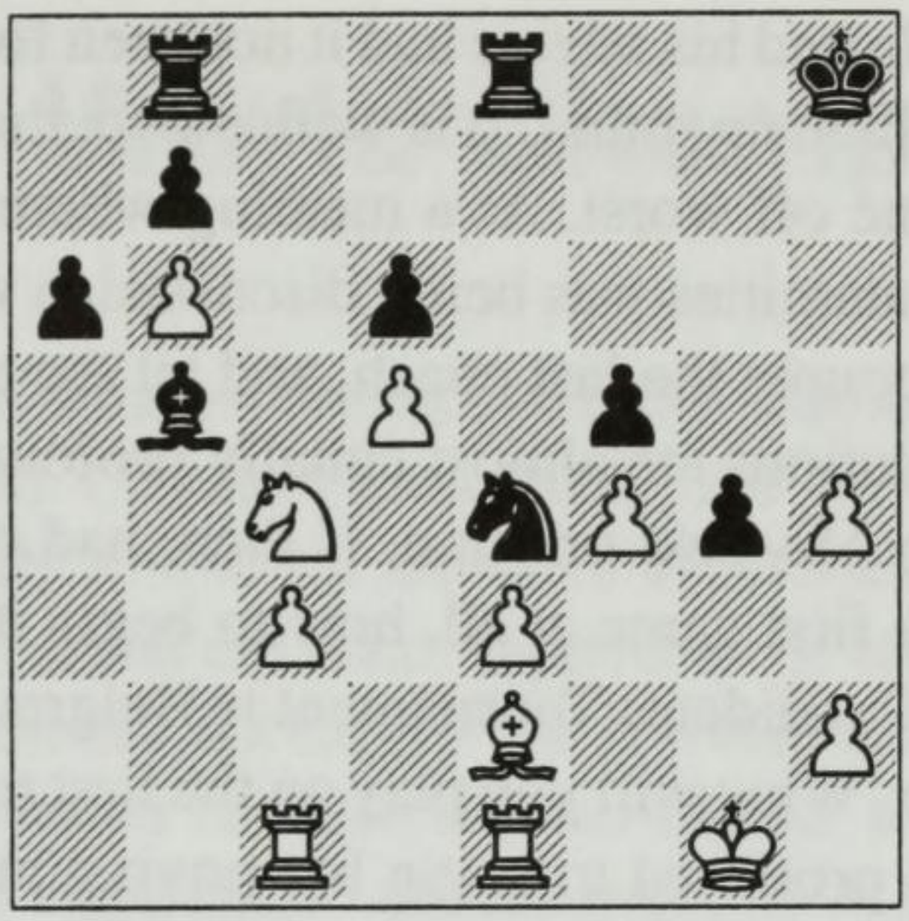


**Botvinnik – Tal**
*Moscow Wch match (8), 1960*

speak, and could happily go without a cigarette for the full five hours) being in no doubt that the game was decided, since in reply to 41 b7 Black wins by 41...♖b3 42 ♘f7+ ♔h7 43 ♘d8 a5 44 d6 a4 45 d7 a3 46 ♘c6 a2. Half-way through the cigarette it all became clear. By means of a simple transposition of moves – **41 ♘f7+!** – it is White who wins, since on 41...♔h7, 42 d6 is decisive, while if 41...♔g7, then in the variation given above on move 46 White moves his knight away to e6 with check.

Arriving back home, Koblents and I spent a few minutes convincing ourselves that further analysis of the adjourned position was unnecessary, and then played through the game. At this point I was in a reasonable mood: one could quote various proverbs appropriate to the incident, such as: 'One must reap where one has sown' etc. Then we reached the position given in the diagram, and almost immediately various unrepeatable words were uttered. We had both noticed that, by continuing 34...♖ec8 instead of 34...♖bc8, Black would have won instantly. It is hardly worth mentioning the fact that I never closed my eyes that night. Forgotten were all the 'presents' received earlier; my heart was tortured by the thought of this scandalous injustice. Early next morning there was a knock at my door, and my second came in. It was clear that he too had not slept well. Smiling, he extracted from his briefcase some fresh tomatoes and a cucumber. We breakfasted, phoned a few friends, and went for a walk around Moscow. Then I dropped in for a moment to the chess club, made sure that Botvinnik had sealed 41 ♘f7+, and in the evening we went to the theatre. (For a long time I was reluctant to talk about this incident, although I am sure that it demonstrates very clearly the mastery of Koblents as a trainer.)

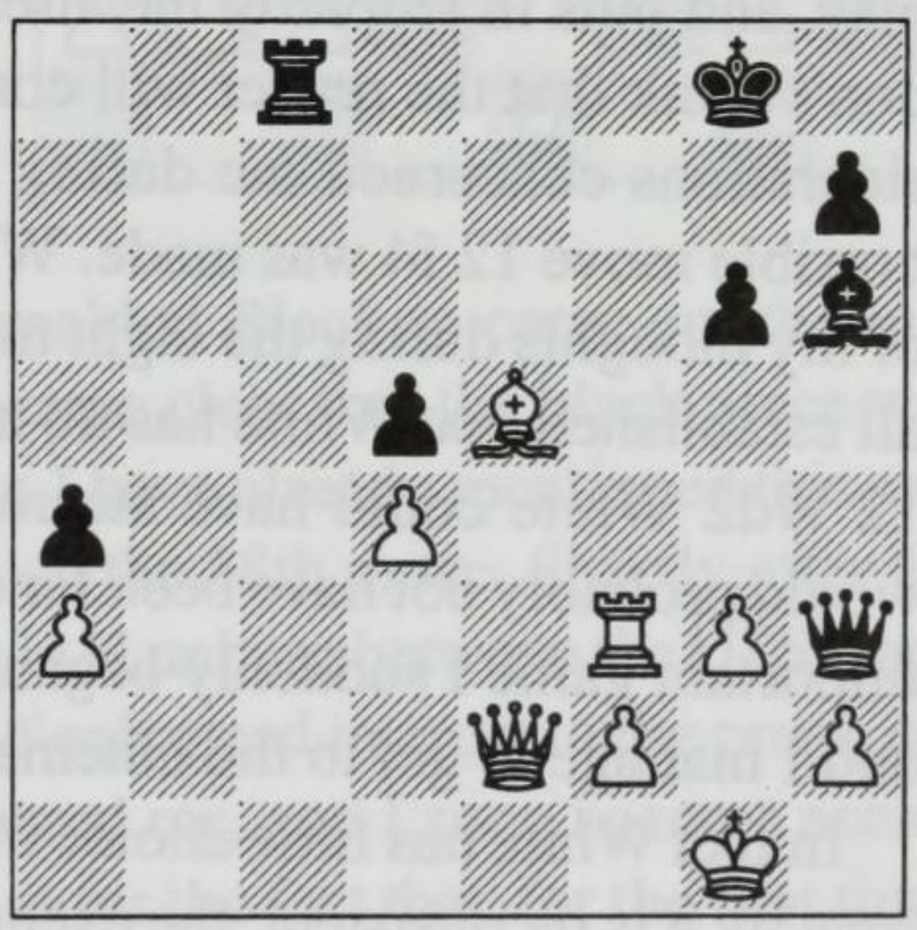
The following game, the ninth, was Botvinnik's best achievement in the match. In his preparations he had succeeded in rendering harmless an apparently very dangerous piece sacrifice, and at the board he exploited my positional errors with

meticulous accuracy. The middle third of the match was extremely hard fought, and its result (+1 −1 =6) fully reflects the character of the struggle. Here fatigue was beginning to have its effect (grandmaster draws in the 13th and 14th games), while a change of opening from 1 e4 brought me success in the 11th game. During this time the two perhaps most interesting drawn games were played (the 10th and 12th).

Despite the difference of two points after the 16th game, it was not at all easy to predict the result of the match. It was without doubt the seventeenth game which proved decisive, for once again I 'sowed', and should have 'reaped', but a fatal blunder by Botvinnik in time-trouble led to the World Champion's defeat. By winning the 19th, which is my favourite game from the match, I succeeded in increasing my lead to 4 points.

**Tal – Botvinnik**
*Moscow Wch match (19), 1960*
Dutch Defence

**1 c4 f5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 d4 d6 6 ♘c3 e6 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♕c2 ♘c6 9 ♖d1 ♕e7 10 ♖b1 a5 11 a3 ♘d8 12 e4 fxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♕xe4 ♘f7 15 ♗h3 ♕f6 16 ♗d2 d5 17 ♕e2 dxc4 18 ♗f4 ♘d6 19 ♘g5 ♖e8 20 ♗g2 ♖a6 21 ♘e4 ♘xe4 22 ♗xe4 b5 23 b3 cxb3 24 ♕xb5 ♖f8 25 ♕xb3 ♖b6 26 ♕e3 ♖xb1 27 ♗xb1 ♗b7 28 ♗a2 ♗d5 29 ♗xd5 exd5 30 ♗xc7 a4 31 ♖d3 ♕f5 32 ♗e5 ♗h6 33 ♕e2 ♖c8 34 ♖f3 ♕h3** *(D)*

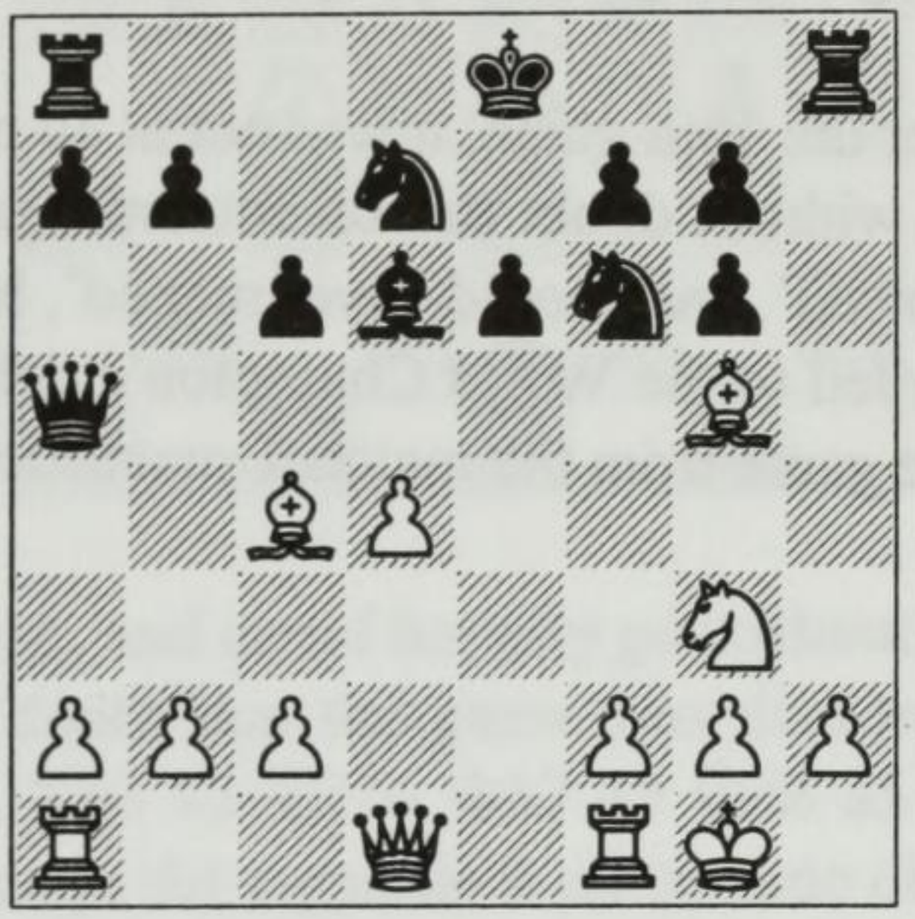



**35 ♗c7 ♗f8 36 ♕b5 ♕e6 37 ♗e5 ♕c6 38 ♕a5 ♖a8 39 ♕d2 ♖c8 40 ♔g2 ♕d7 41 h4 ♕g4**

This was the sealed move. Black resigned (**1-0**) without resuming play.

JOURNALIST. *This is the game that you like the most, but which move do you remember best of all from this, the most important match of your life?*

CHESS PLAYER. I think the 12th move of the seventeenth game, which I have already mentioned.




**Tal – Botvinnik**
*Moscow Wch match (17), 1960*

**12 f4?!**

'Horrible', 'anti-positional', 'unbelievable' etc., etc. – this is how all the commentators, without exception, described this last move by White. One might think that the player with White was completely unfamiliar with any elementary book on chess, where it is written in black and white that one really can't make a move such as 12 f4, since it weakens the dark squares, leaves the bishop at g5 out of play, and puts in jeopardy the already compromised position of the white king. I don't think that the reader will consider me immodest, if I say that all these considerations concerned me during the game. Nevertheless, the fact remains: the horrible move 12 f4 was made. Why? I will now try to briefly explain the course of my thoughts during the eight minutes that I spent over my 12th move. I first of all established that White has no trace of an opening advantage. Nevertheless, by 12 ♕d2 White could have steered the ship towards the drawing haven, which would probably not have been far off. Although it may sound silly, during such an important game I suddenly began to be bothered by the question: 'Will my wife and I manage to get to the cinema or theatre?'

In fact White has little choice in this position: his bishop is attacked and any retreat by it is inconsistent; the exchange on f6 is devoid of any positional sense, defending the bishop by ♕c1 is very passive, and the move 12 f4 is simply bad. Thus it is the drawbacks to all the possible moves which are most apparent. Finally my wandering gaze settled on the move 12 f4. At first I became somehow embarrassed, for the drawbacks to this move are more obvious than to any other

one, although in the given position there is no move without its drawbacks. Less apparent are the advantages of this move, but they do exist, although not in a purely chess sense. In the first place, the move 'demands a refutation' which should be accompanied by the possibility of a double-edged, tactical struggle, and this, to judge by Botvinnik's style in the match, would be undesirable for him. Secondly, the weakening of White's position can only be exploited by an undermining of the centre, and after moves such as ...c5 or ...e5 the power of the white bishops will be significantly increased. Finally, Black can attack White's kingside only by castling queenside, but then White can set in motion his queenside pawn mass. Perhaps Black should simply have replied 12...0-0, but this is after all not a refutation .

JOURNALIST. *And Botvinnik's best move?*
CHESS PLAYER. Probably the 23rd move in his best game, the ninth.

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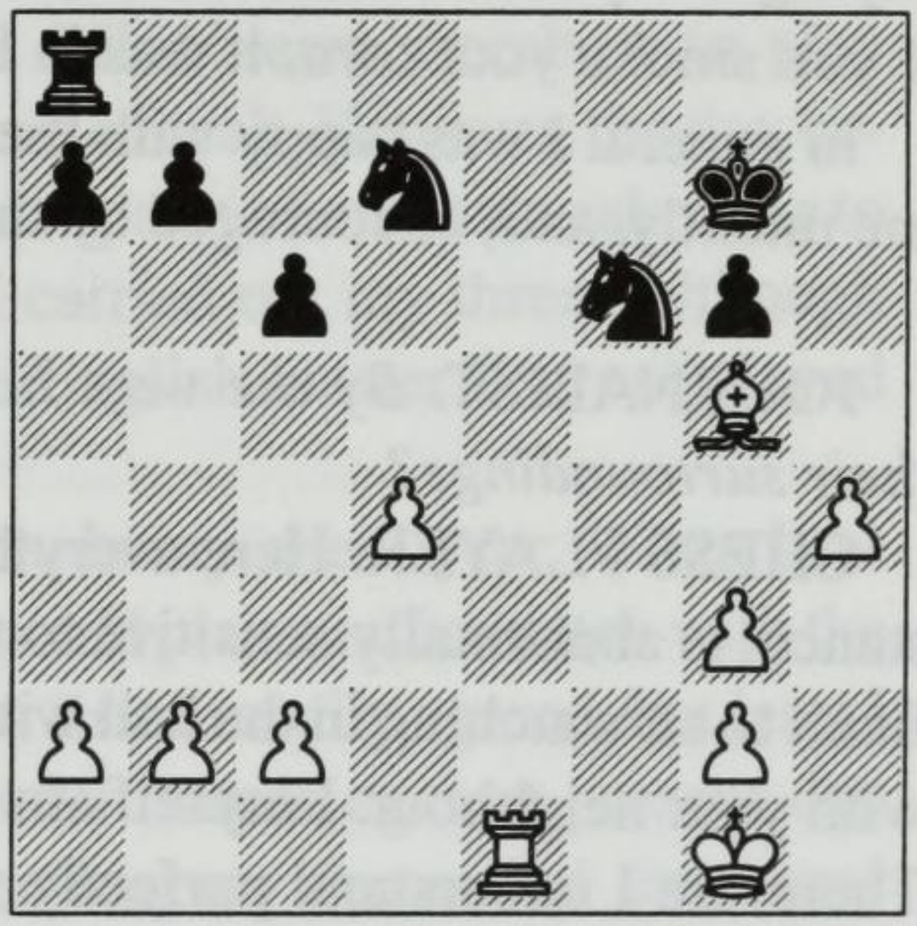


**Tal – Botvinnik**
*Moscow Wch match (9), 1960*

The apparently modest move **23...♖f8!!** enabled Black to carry out the manoeuvre ...♘g4 and...♘df6, after which it became clear that the black piece was stronger than the three white pawns. However, I have already mentioned this earlier. I will add that Botvinnik went on to win on the 58th move. Shortly after the match there was an interesting friendly match in Hamburg between the USSR and West Germany. At that time I was an object of enhanced interest to the press, but to be honest, this had never particularly bothered me, and I soon became accustomed to it. And the match was also significant for the fact that, for the first time, I officially began to smoke.

I made my first contact with cigarettes during the Candidates Tournament. As you will recall, I made a poor start and for a short time I became depressed and my post-operation stitches began to pull unpleasantly. Here, one of the journalists,

after making a professional assessment of my condition, offered me a cigarette. I tried one, it worked, and I even liked it. I took to smoking in my room, and since I finished in first place I did not think about the harmful effects of tobacco. At home I systematically began to 'borrow' the odd couple of cigarettes from my uncle. During the match with Botvinnik I was already smoking openly, but for some reason not during the game – I didn't feel I wanted to. On the way to Hamburg I warned my fellow smokers Geller and Tolush that if I should show any weakness during play and ask them for a cigarette, they should refuse to give me one.

Then came the first game, against Lehmann. Round about move five he put his hand into his pocket, brought out a cigar, and began puffing away at it. I held out for another ten moves, but then the board began to rock slightly in front of me. 'In search of counterplay' I turned to Geller and Tolush, but they simply spread their hands: 'Misha, you yourself asked us not to give you any'.

I dashed into the bar and bought a packet of untipped 'Camel'. Since there is a saying that you are not a smoker if you smoke other people's cigarettes, but only if you smoke your own, it was in Hamburg that I became a smoker.

In general I was happy with the way the match went. The spectators followed me intently, and, encouraged by their interest, I had but one draw in eight games.

JOURNALIST. *By the way, how in general are famous players affected by their surroundings?*

CHESS PLAYER. Here everything depends on the individual. Fischer, for instance, is abnormally sensitive to the slightest noise in the hall, but it is very difficult to sit watching in the hall without stirring, and without exchanging opinions with your neighbour. I myself am sometimes a spectator, and I know that it is so. Therefore I understand perfectly well how Fischer, Botvinnik, and many others players find it very difficult to force themselves to concentrate fully, one hundred per cent, under such conditions.

Then there are other players, among them Spassky, Korchnoi and myself. For us it is simply boring to play in an empty hall. When we appear on the stage, we are artistes. The only difference is that chess has its own specific form. You yourself are the composer of the 'song', you are the singer, and you are the critic, and a very harsh critic, because you wish without fail to refute the ideas and plans of your 'fellow composer'.

When we are playing and there is a hum in the hall, some of us are annoyed, justifiably so, for it is indeed somewhat distracting. With me it is just the opposite, provided only that I am in good form. When things are not working out for me I also get annoyed. I am probably a little jealous if the spectators react noisily to a move made on a neighbouring board or by my opponent, and not by me. Then I

notice that there is a noise in the hall. When I am in good form, it is not a noise, but a reaction from the hall. Something altogether different!

The remainder of the year, from September onwards, was spent resting, during which time I worked on my book about the match with Botvinnik.

During the Olympiad in Leipzig there was also a happy event: my son was born.

At the Olympiad my play was, on the whole, successful. The game with Fischer is given here, and I gained the impression that it was only after this encounter that he began to 'respect' me.

JOURNALIST. *How did it happen that it was in this Olympiad that you were second in the tournament on your board, and failed to win it?*

CHESS PLAYER. Indeed, it was Robatsch who won, playing in the second final group. I deprived myself of first place in the final round. This is how it happened. The Olympiad ended on the day before my birthday and I wanted to be free at the finish. Therefore I agreed with my fellow team members to play through the 'middlegame' of the Olympiad without a break. However, the day before the last round, for strictly private reasons, the captain of our team asked me to play. I 'threatened' him that I would lose, and I carried out my threat, although God knows, I didn't want to. It was just that the English master Penrose played the whole game very well.

It turned out that the Olympiad did not conclude my chess year. When I returned to Riga it was suddenly suggested that I should play a radio match with the strongest young players from Czechoslovakia. At first I readily agreed, but later I regretted this somewhat – after all, to play on 20 boards against present-day Grandmasters such as Hort, Jansa and their colleagues demanded time, and preparations had to be made for the return match with Botvinnik. After travelling to Prague to conclude the radio match, I ceased to regret it, this time for good: the trip proved to be most pleasurable and entertaining. Besides, it was not without its amusing little misunderstandings, caused by the fact that our intermediary, a correspondent of Czech radio in Moscow, had only a very sketchy knowledge of chess. Thus, for instance, in one of the games, after **1 e4 e5**, I sent the move **2 ♘f3**, and in reply received the suggestion that I take it back. If I were to insist on it, my youthful opponent courteously warned me, then on 2 f3(???) he would play 2...♗c5.

Nevertheless, I think that the two sides were about equally satisfied with the score of +11 =9.

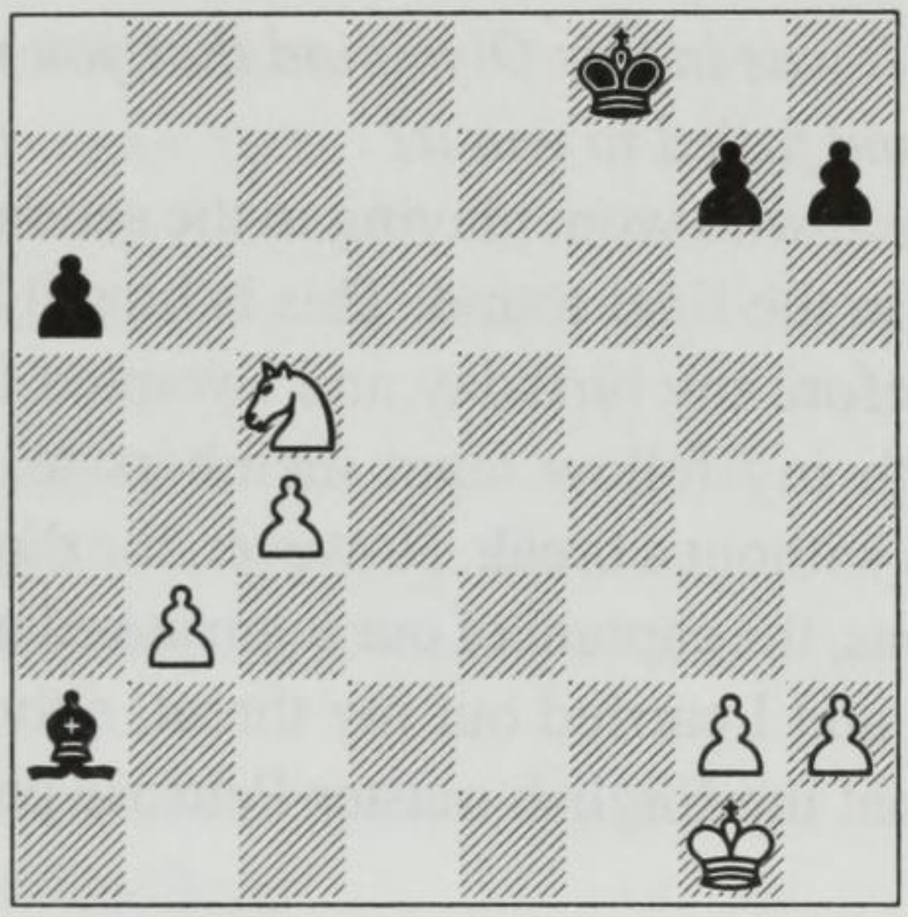
Then came a small New Year Tournament in Stockholm, one of the steps in my preparations for the match.

JOURNALIST. *Botvinnik considered this appearance of yours to be unnecessary and ill-advised.*

CHESS PLAYER. On that basis, the same could have been said about the tournament in Riga before our first match. The point is, most probably, that the winner is not criticised whereas the loser is always wrong. True, Koblents and I never considered ourselves to be specialists in the art of preparation.

The Stockholm tournament was not one of my most difficult, although its short length made it all the more important not to lose. The game against Unzicker is given here, and the analysis of my adjourned game with Böök was of interest.

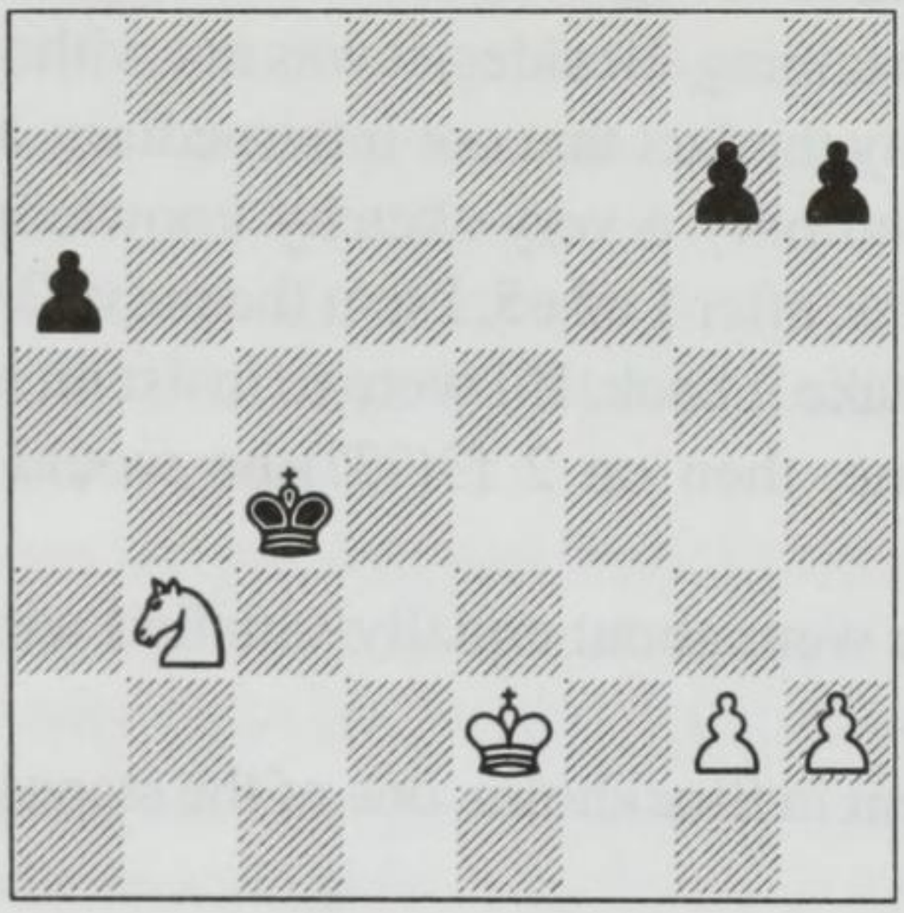
*B*



**Tal – Böök**
*Stockholm, 1961*

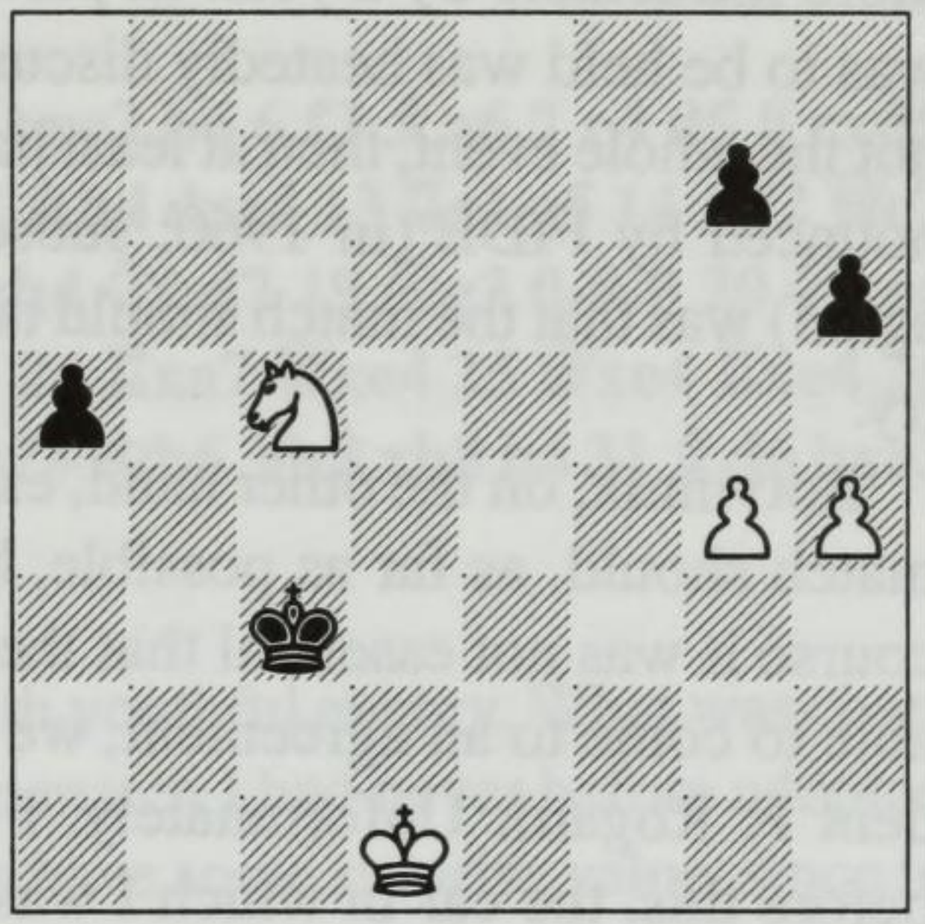
I had no doubt that Black would have sealed **41...♔e7**. The resumption proved unexpectedly easy for me, since on **42 ♔f2** Black replied **42...a5?**, and after **43 ♔e3 a4 44 bxa4 ♗xc4 45 ♔d4 ♗f1 46 g3 ♔d6 47 ♘e4+ ♔c6 48 ♘g5**, he **resigned (1-0)**. My task would have been exceptionally difficult if Black had continued 42...♔d6! 43 ♘e4+ ♔e5 44 ♘d2 ♔d4 45 ♔e2 ♗xb3! 46 ♘xb3+ ♔xc4 *(D)*.

*W*



After this I was intending to play 47 ♘d2+! (nothing is gained by 47 ♘a5+ ♔b5 48 ♘b7 ♔c6 49 ♘d8+ ♔d5, when the knight is very badly placed) 47...♔c3 48 ♘e4+ ♔c2 49 g4! h6 50 h3! Strange as it may seem – the only move. The plausible 50 h4 leads surprisingly to a draw, and I think that the drawing method should be of interest to study composers: 50...a5 51 ♘c5 ♔c3 52 ♔d1 *(D)*.

*B*



Now the natural 52...♔d4 loses to 53 ♘e6+ ♔e4 54 ♘xg7 ♔f4 55 g5 hxg5 56 h5 ♔e5 (or 56...g4 57 h6 g3 58 ♔e2) 57 ♘e8! ♔f5 (otherwise White's pawn queens) 58 ♘d6+ ♔f6 59 ♘e4+ followed by 60 ♘g3. Yet the position is drawn: Black must continue 52...a4!! 53 ♔c1 (53 ♘xa4+ ♔d4) a3 54 ♔b1, and only now 54...♔d4 55 ♘e6+ ♔e4 56 ♘xg7 ♔f4 57 g5 hxg5 58 h5 g4 59 h6 g3 60 ♘e6+ ♔f5! 61 h7 g2, with a draw. After 50 h3 none of these variations arises.

One disagreeable event which, it is true, came after the finish of the tournament, was a recurrence of kidney colic in Moscow, just before the flight to Prague. At first it was bearable but I returned from Prague under medical supervision after lying there in hospital for several days. From Prague they even sent their medical diagnosis to Moscow, whereupon our Chess Federation began considering the question of deferring the match. I was asked to send a letter to the President of FIDE with preliminary evidence from a doctor commissioned by my opponent. To me this all seemed to be very complicated and rather insulting, and I preferred to play. Besides, my participation in the first match had itself given me enormous satisfaction, and I was even waiting impatiently for the second encounter.

When I meet chess fans, I often have to answer a ticklish question: what do you think of return matches? As it happened, the honour of 'closing this page of FIDE' fell to my lot. What would it have cost the International Chess Federation to take the decision to abolish return matches a year earlier?!

I had no doubt that Botvinnik would utilise his right to a return match. There was also no justification for doubting that he would be excellently prepared, especially after his splendid performance at the Olympiad in Leipzig. Not long before the start of this, we once again met in Moscow to discuss the conditions for the match. On this occasion there was indeed a discussion – I had after all become more intractable by a year. In particular, the question of where the return match was to be held was heatedly discussed. In Riga they very much wanted to see, if not the whole event, then at least half of it. One of the points in the regulations announced by FIDE (in 1960; subsequently I somehow never came across them again) was that the match should take place in the World Champion's home country.

Botvinnik, on the other hand, expressed the following point of view: the return match should, as far as possible, be an exact copy of the first match, though of course it was not essential that the result should be the same. Since we were unable to come to an agreement, we decided to ask the opinion of the FIDE President F. Rogard. Unfortunately, I arrived a few days late in Leipzig (not long before this, the car in which I was travelling to the Crimea skidded into a ditch, and a wheel and two ribs were damaged), and during this period Mr Rogard had had time to listen to my opponent, agree with him, and depart.

So once again it was Moscow in the spring. The controllers were our charming old friends Ståhlberg and Golombek, while Euwe also arrived for the start. The draw was held in the 'National' hotel, and on the following day the first game was played, with Botvinnik White.

The character of the first game showed that my opponent was in every way excellently prepared for the match. From the opening Black obtained a very good game. Despite the early exchange of queens, the position reached was of a clearly middlegame character, but the then World Champion decided to play solidly. Gradually the position became level, then it was Botvinnik who obtained a slight advantage. Not anticipating such a turn of events, Black played the ending uncertainly, and although the game was adjourned there was no need for a resumption. By my win in the second game I succeeded in levelling the score for the last time in the match. In the Caro-Kann Defence Botvinnik introduced a very important innovation, which neutralised the very system which, during our preparations, we had decided to make our main weapon against 1...c6. For a long time Black had a good position, but in the time-scramble I managed to 'outwit' my opponent and, after a sleepless night with Koblents, I won the game on resumption. Here, incidentally, for the first time I sealed a move (for the return match the two envelopes had been abolished). Beginning with the third game, Botvinnik took the lead. In the fourth and fifth games I managed to extricate myself, the sixth was a quiet

draw (evidently the only one in the whole match), and then in the seventh came a further telling blow.

**Botvinnik – Tal**
*Moscow Wch match (7), 1961*
Nimzo-Indian Defence

**1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 d4 ♗b4 4 a3 ♗xc3+ 5 bxc3 b6 6 f3 ♗a6 7 e4 d5 8 cxd5 ♗xf1 9 ♔xf1 exd5 10 ♗g5 h6 11 ♕a4+ c6 12 ♗h4 dxe4 13 ♖e1 g5 14 ♗f2 ♕e7 15 ♘e2 b5 16 ♕c2 ♕xa3 17 h4 gxh4 18 ♗xh4 ♘bd7 19 ♘g3 0-0-0 20 ♘xe4 ♖he8 21 ♔f2 ♘xe4+ 22 fxe4 f6 23 ♖a1 ♕e7 24 ♖xa7 ♕xe4 25 ♕xe4 ♖xe4 26 ♖a8+ ♘b8 27 ♗g3 ♔b7 28 ♖ha1 ♖c8 29 ♖8a7+ ♔b6 30 ♗xb8 b4 31 ♗d6 bxc3 32 ♗c5+ ♔b5 33 ♖1a4 1-0**

Botvinnik played the whole of this game with youthful energy. What was characteristic was the following: prior to the return match I had never before adopted this system, and it could have been expected to have some surprise value, since in our preparations the possibility of the Sämisch Variation had been taken into account. However, White's tenth and eleventh moves (undoubtedly planned beforehand by Botvinnik) showed that my opponent had studied not only everything that had already occurred, but also everything that might occur.

After the eighth game my mood improved significantly.

**Tal – Botvinnik**
*Moscow Wch match (8), 1961*
Caro-Kann Defence

**1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 dxc5 e6 5 ♕g4 ♘c6 6 ♘f3 ♕c7 7 ♗b5 ♗d7 8 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 9 ♗e3 ♘h6 10 ♗xh6 gxh6 11 ♘bd2 ♕xc5 12 c4 0-0-0 13 0-0 ♔b8 14 ♖fd1 ♕b6 15 ♕h4 a5 16 ♖ac1 ♖g8 17 ♘b3 a4 18 c5 ♕c7 19 ♘bd4 ♖c8 20 b4 axb3 21 axb3 ♕d8 22 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 23 b4 ♖g4 24 b5 ♖c8 25 c6 ♗e8 26 ♖c2 ♗g7 27 ♖a1 ♗xe5 28 ♘xe5 ♖xd4 29 ♘d7+ 1-0**

I appeared to be coming into form, and at a 'council of war' the decision was taken to attempt, in the next few games, to change the course of the match in complications. Alas, this hope was not destined to be fulfilled. It began when I caught a bad cold, and was forced to take two consecutive rest days. There was a great temptation to use the whole limit, but in the end I decided to save one rest day, just in case. This was perhaps a mistake. Literally straight from hospital I attempted to

play aggressively, and for this I was essentially unprepared. Botvinnik easily parried Black's attack, and soon achieved both a positional and a material advantage. Black's one achievement in this game was to make it last for 73 moves.

Events developed similarly in the following game. My fully viable 'reserve' variation against the Caro-Kann (3 e5 ♗f5 4 h4) was thoroughly spoiled by my poor 9th and 10th moves. Botvinnik quickly obtained the better ending, and all my tactical tricks proved fruitless.

In the eleventh game came the opposite extreme. It is difficult to explain by anything but demoralisation my decision to play the Slav Defence, for almost the first time in my life, almost imploring my opponent to exchange on d5, and, with a lead of three points, let me off with a draw. Botvinnik fulfilled the first part of this programme, but for some reason he considered his lead to be insufficient, and he adopted a continuation for White which he had prepared some 15 years before our game. Black was unable to find the correct rejoinder, and soon after the opening the game transposed into an ending highly favourable for White.

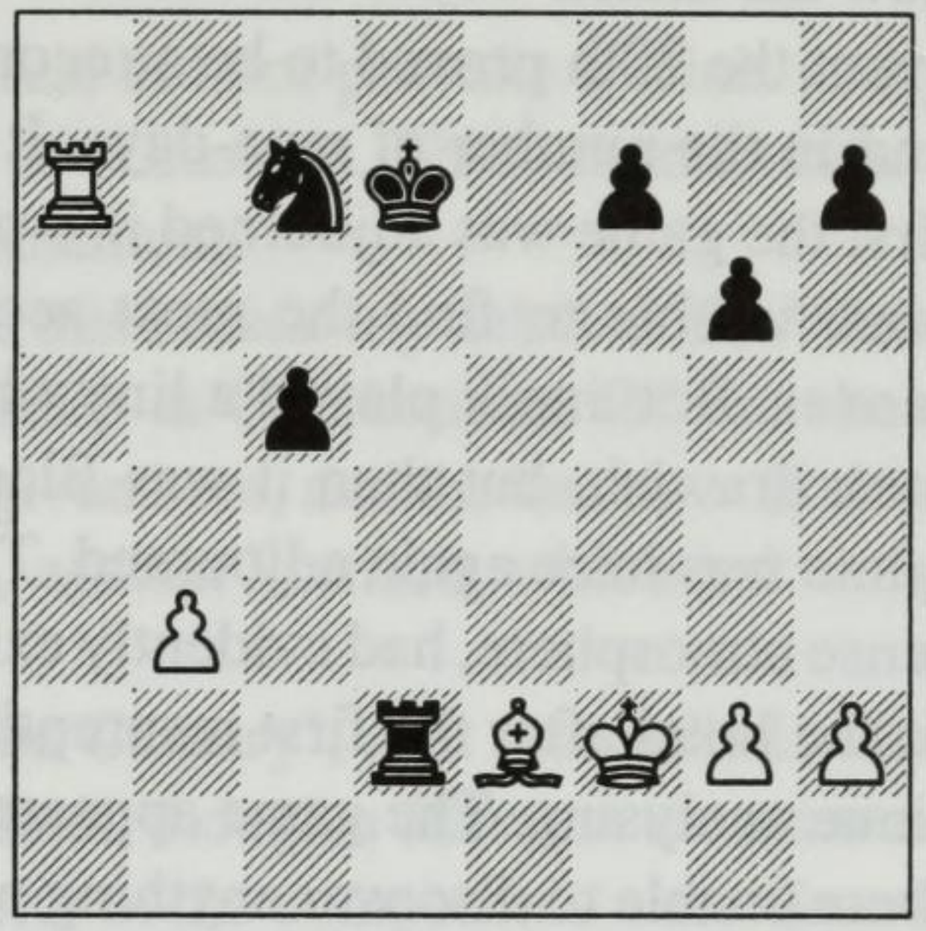
Today I realise that a difference of four points essentially signifies the end of a match. At that time I did not realise this, and I battled on with, I would say, considerable optimism, which was reflected to a certain extent in the statistics of the match. Things were apparently alright with my 'forwards' – I managed to win five games (six in 1960) – but my defence ... the ten defeats tell the whole story. In some games I would allow Botvinnik to slip out, in others he would do the same to me, but my opponent approached closer and closer to the 12½ point mark. On losing in the eighteenth game, after which the score became 11½-5½, I was already prepared in the following game to congratulate Botvinnik on his overall victory. It was just at that time that my old friend, International Master (now Grandmaster) Padevsky arrived in Moscow from Bulgaria, having already prepared an article on the return match (more accurately, the title of the article was: 'The king is dead, long live the king!'). We went to the nineteenth game together, and outside the Estrada theatre came across a large number of vehicles: the Newsreel and Central Television organisations had sent their correspondents along to cover the anticipated coronation. It was evidently this circumstance that thoroughly aroused me, and I played the 19th game as though to spite the press.

**Botvinnik – Tal**
*Moscow Wch match (19), 1961*
King's Indian Defence

**1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 d6 3 ♘c3 g6 4 e4 ♗g7 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3 a6 7 ♕d2 c6 8 ♗d3 e5 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 ♘a4 b5 11 ♘b6 ♖a7 12 ♗c2 ♗e6 13 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 14 ♘e2 ♖b7 15**

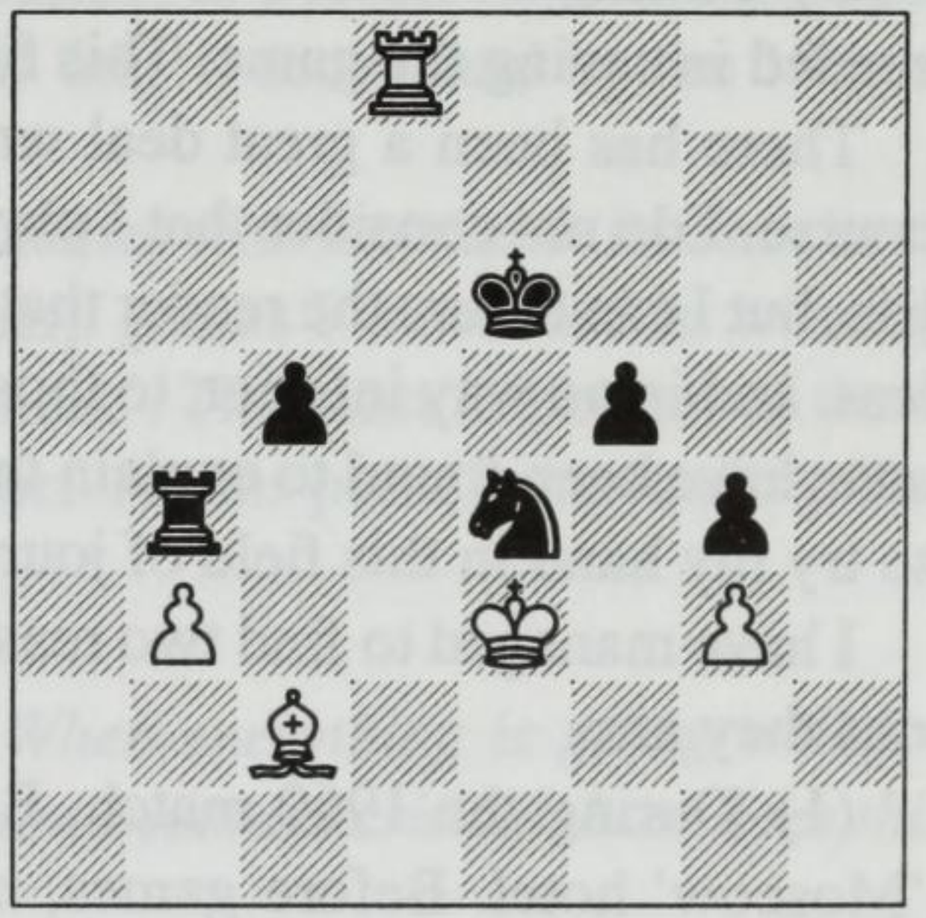
**c5 a5 16 ♔f2 ♗f8 17 ♖hd1 ♖xd1 18 ♖xd1 ♘fd7 19 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 20 ♗b1 ♗xc5 21 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 22 ♖c1 ♘a6 23 f4 exf4 24 ♘xf4 c5 25 ♔e3 ♔f8 26 e5 ♔e7 27 ♗e4 ♖c7 28 a4 bxa4 29 ♖a1 ♗b3 30 ♘d5+ ♗xd5 31 ♗xd5 ♖d7 32 ♗c4 ♘b4 33 ♖xa4 ♖d4 34 ♗b5 ♔e6 35 ♖xa5 ♘d5+ 36 ♔f2 ♔xe5 37 ♗e2 ♔d6 38 ♖a6+ ♔d7 39 ♖a7+ ♘c7 40 b3 ♖d2** *(D)*

*W*



**41 ♔f3 f5 42 h4 ♔c6 43 ♗c4 h6 44 g3 ♖d4 45 ♔f2 g5 46 hxg5 hxg5 47 ♖a2 g4 48 ♖a1 ♔b6 49 ♖e1 ♘b5 50 ♖e6+ ♘d6 51 ♔e3 ♔c7 52 ♗d3 ♔c6 53 ♗c2 ♖b4 54 ♖f6 ♔d5 55 ♖f8 ♔e5 56 ♖a8 ♘e4 57 ♖e8+ ♔d5 58 ♖d8+ ♔e6** *(D)*

*W*



**59 ♔f4 ♘d2+ 60 ♔e3 ♘xb3 61 ♖e8+ ♔d7 62 ♖e5 ♔d6 63 ♖xf5 ♘d4 64 ♖f2 ♘xc2+ 65 ♖xc2 ♔d5 66 ♖h2 ♖e4+ 67 ♔d2 c4 68 ♖h8 ♖d4+ 69 ♔e3 ♖d3+ 70 ♔f4 c3 71 ♖d8+ ♔c4 72 ♖c8+ ♔b3 73 ♖b8+ ♔a2 74 ♖c8 ♔b2 75 ♖b8+ ♔c1 0-1**

What was especially pleasant was the fact that, in this game, our analysis of the

adjourned position proved to be more accurate than that from Botvinnik's celebrated laboratory.

Once again some illusory hopes appeared. In his article 'Analysis or improvisation', written soon after the match, Botvinnik said that he had been very tired, and that if the 20th game had turned out unfavourably for him, it was not clear how the match would have ended. This is, of course, an exaggeration, but in any event the 20th proved to be a record game, both in the number of moves (120!), and in the number of man-days. It was twice adjourned, and twice resumed. At first the game was adjourned in a position where I knew there was a win, but we were unable to find the most accurate plan. On the resumption, after only 4 moves, Botvinnik played a line which we had not foreseen. The game began to look drawish, but then it was Black who made a mistake. After 88 moves the game was once again adjourned. The preceding games, played in a continuously tense atmosphere, had evidently exhausted both players. At any rate, on returning to the hotel after the first resumption, I simply did not have the strength to continue analysing. The game appeared to be won, but during the next two days we were unable to discover anything new. Perhaps therefore, when I once again took my place on the stage, I failed to notice the expressive faces of the stage attendants, who had heard from Botvinnik that his position was hopeless, nor did I pay any attention to the absence of my opponent's traditional thermos, and even failed to take into account the distressed shaking of his head.

By finding a clever idea based on a stalemating possibility, Botvinnik succeeded in saving the game. This finally settled matters.

There has been a great deal written about the result of the return match. Of course, I do not consider that I played better in this match than at any time in my life, but I can assure the reader that my preparations for the second match were no less, and in no way inferior, to those for the first match. Meanwhile, so many reasons have been found to explain the fall after my ascent, that I myself would like to try my hand in this field of journalistic solidarity, as it were.

I have managed to find two reasons: the reader can judge for himself how serious they are:

(1) During the 1960 match, Botvinnik and I lived in adjacent rooms in the 'Moscow' hotel. Before games, my second would make his protégé happy by singing Neapolitan songs. This inspired me, but in all probability demoralised Botvinnik. During the return match Botvinnik did not stay in the 'Moscow' hotel.

(2) By the eighth game of the return match I finally succeeded in selecting a 'lucky' pencil. Alas, after winning, I left it on the table. When, a week later, I returned, the pencil had gone (perhaps an unknown supporter of Mikhail Moiseyevich had taken it). I did not manage to find an adequate replacement.

This is all, as they say, 'journalism'. Seriously speaking, I was quite unprepared for the change which had taken place in Botvinnik. He arrived for the 1961 match extremely self-disciplined and aggressive, readily going in for a stormy position if it looked favourable for him, which he had not done in 1960. In the main one must look to the form of the winner to find an explanation for the result of the match.

In conclusion, I should remark that the defeat did not provoke a crisis in my game, although I have read this on a number of occasions. Three months later I succeeded in taking first place in a strong tournament.

This was the tournament in Bled, but before this I made my debut as Ex-World Champion in the European Team Championship at Oberhausen. Of the chess events I should mention the game with Toran given here, and the last time (for the moment!) that I adopted the French Defence, against Portisch, which led to the score between us becoming 1-1.

But now about Bled, the 'Tournament of the Century', as it was called at the time. Once again the familiar town, the same hotel, though a different tournament hall which had only just been built. The majority of the competitors were Grandmasters.

I was evidently still very conservative, for my first result to appear in the table was a nought. After adjourning my first game against Ivkov, I then went down without a fight against Fischer. About once a year I used to write down one move, and then make a different one, and on this occasion, as a result of such a transposition, I had a difficult position as early as the 6th(!!) move, and by the 10th or 12th a lost one.

In this tournament I realised that the two matches with Botvinnik had not been altogether to no purpose, since along with sharp games I succeeded in winning several by purely strategic means, 'à la Botvinnik'. The most important of these was the encounter in the last round with Najdorf. At this point I was leading Fischer by only half a point.

JOURNALIST. *One question in passing. When everything is going well for you, and then suddenly the tournament situation becomes critical, how does this affect you?*

CHESS PLAYER. It becomes more interesting and I even begin to get nervous, which is also good. During a tournament a player has no right to be a mummy, but the nervousness must come from inspiration and not from a shaking of the knees.

It was especially interesting on this occasion, for Fischer, who was my rival, demonstratively took Najdorf aside to prepare him for our game. It was quite

clear: Najdorf was being initiated into the secrets of an interesting variation of the Sicilian Defence, which Fischer systematically and successfully later adopted as Black.

On the evening before the game, the Soviet Grandmasters were with Gligorić in the hotel bar, when Fischer came up to the table and confidentially informed me: 'You will lose tomorrow to Najdorf. But on the whole you haven't played badly, and I have no objection to sharing first place with you, so I won't win against Ivkov.'

I did my best to dissuade Robert, but he stuck to his opinion. The following day I played a completely different variation against Najdorf. Fischer came up, saw what was happening, and frowned ...

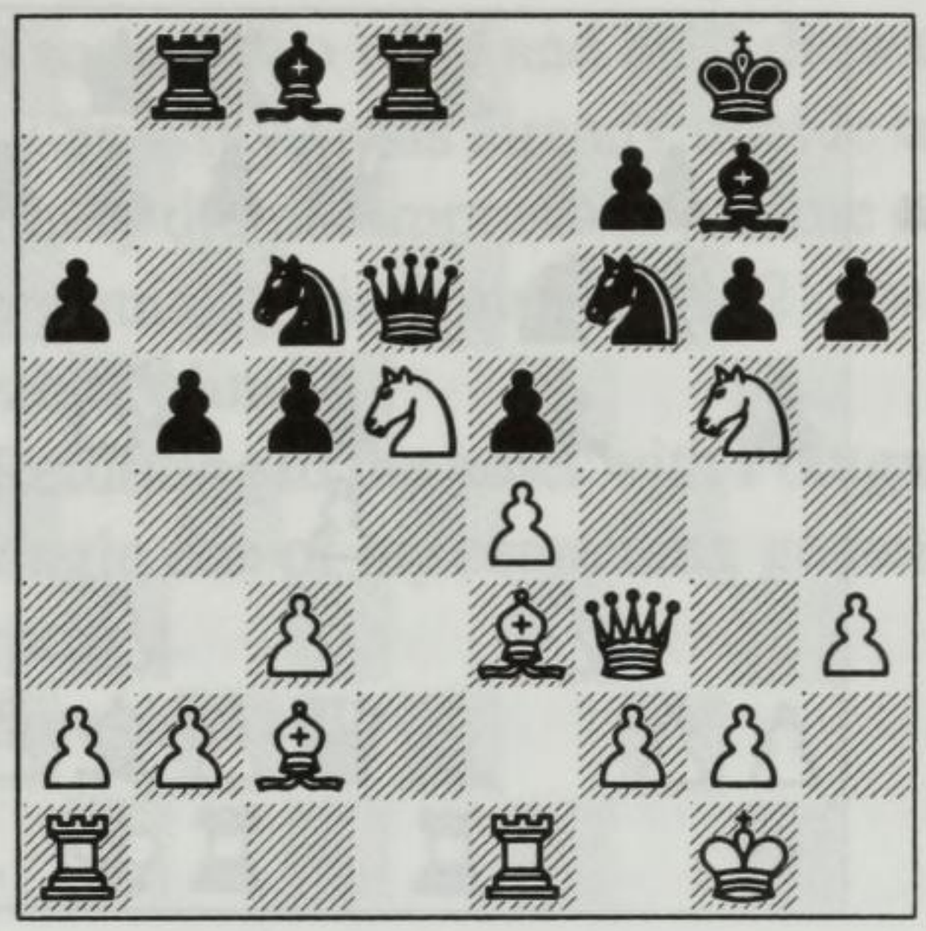
**Tal – Najdorf**
*Bled, 1961*
Sicilian Defence

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e2** The Najdorf-Fischer duo had prepared for my normal 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4, the reply 7...♕b6!? **6...e5 7 ♘b3 ♗e7 8 ♗g5 ♗e6 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 11 ♕d3 ♘c6 12 ♘d5 ♗g5 13 ♖fd1 ♔h8 14 c3 f5 15 ♗f3 ♗xd5 16 ♕xd5 fxe4 17 ♕xe4 ♕e7 18 ♕d5 ♖f6 19 ♘d2 ♗xd2 20 ♖xd2 ♕c7 21 ♖e1 ♖af8 22 ♖e3 g6 23 ♗e4 ♔g7 24 ♖f3 ♖xf3 25 ♗xf3 ♖f6 26 ♗e4 ♕f7 27 ♕b3 ♕xb3 28 axb3 ♘d8 29 b4 ♔f7 30 ♖d5 ♔e8 31 b5 axb5 32 ♖xb5 ♖f7 33 ♖b6 ♔d7 34 ♗d5 ♖f4 35 g3 ♖a4 36 ♗xb7 ♖a1+ 37 ♔g2 ♔c7 38 ♖a6 ♖b1 39 ♗d5 ♖xb2 40 ♖a7+ ♘b7 41 ♔f3 ♔b8 42 ♖a6 ♔c7 43 ♖a8 ♘c5 44 ♖a7+ ♘b7 45 h4 ♔b8 46 ♖a6 ♔c7 47 ♖a8 ♖b5 48 c4 ♖b3+ 49 ♔g4 1-0**

Fischer nevertheless stuck to his part of the deal: he played nearly 20 moves more against Ivkov, literally until there were only the kings left, but did not manage to win.

On the return journey, Keres and I had to 'jump out' of the plane, which stopped off at Kiev on the flight from Belgrade to Moscow. There we ran to catch the Kiev-Riga flight, and the following day were already at the board in the semi-final of the USSR team tournament. Although there were only three rounds of the tournament remaining, for me it was still the start! And so, inevitably giving in to the mysterious force, I straight away lost to the candidate master Barstatis ...

This was followed by a quick draw with my flight-companion Keres, and then I managed to celebrate my son's first birthday with a victory over Averbakh (*see diagram on next page*).



W

**Tal – Averbakh**
*USSR Club Championship, 1961*

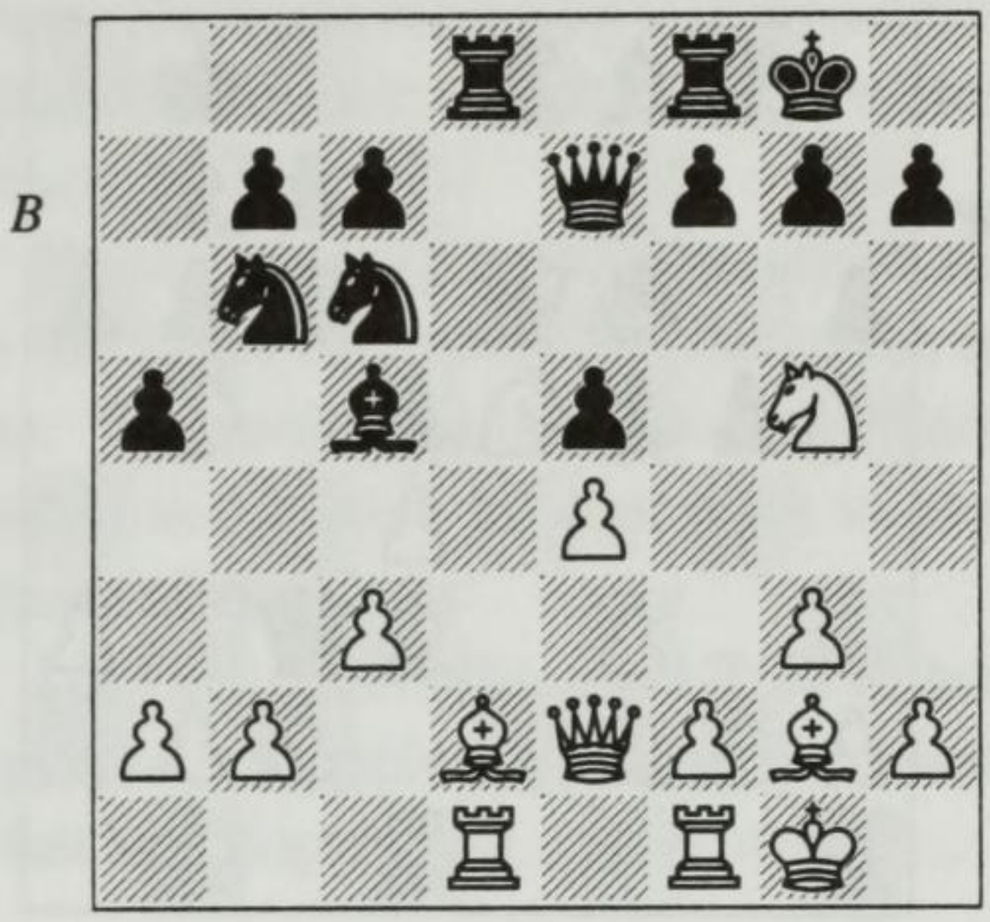
**21 ♘xf6+! ♗xf6 22 ♖ad1 ♕e7 23 ♗xc5! ♖xd1 24 ♖xd1 ♕xc5 25 ♕xf6 hxg5 26 ♗b3 ♖b7** If 26...♗e6, then 27 ♗xe6 fxe6 28 ♖d7. **27 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 28 ♕h6+ ♔e8 29 ♖d5 ♕b6 30 ♕h8+ ♔e7 31 ♕xc8 1-0**

The 'Daugava' team reached the final, which pleased us all. But before this final took place, the fate of the individual USSR Championship gold medal was to be decided.

This Championship went so badly for me, that during it I was even reminded of my tournament position in the quarter-final at Vilnius. Perhaps this was because, in my game at the start with Bagirov, a kind of psychological change took place in my conscious mind. My opponent was in severe time-trouble. I had a winning position, and I saw a sharp but convincing enough way to win. Just here the thought entered my head that, in our second match, Botvinnik had many times ignored my time-trouble, and had played somehow exaggeratedly calmly. So I set my king off on an unnecessary journey, whereupon my astonished opponent gave several instant checks, reducing his time deficit with every move. My king crossed half the board before I realised that in the place he was heading for he would be mated. There was no way back, and Bagirov forced perpetual check.

Although only half a point had been lost, which over a distance of 21 rounds is almost insignificant, the 'favourable wind' had also died down. As a result, in the subsequent rounds, there followed one draw after another, including some that were pretty annoying.

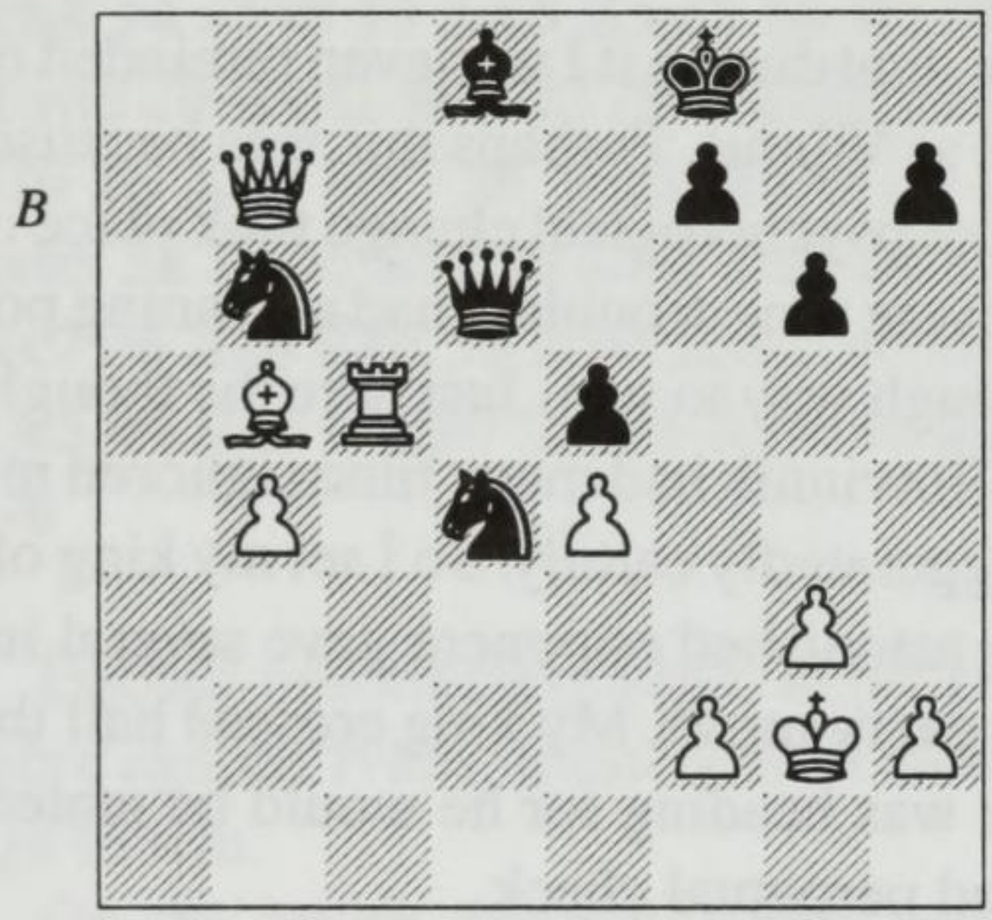
In the diagram on the following page, in order to carry out my intended combination, I had to lure the white bishop out to h3, where, incidentally, it would occupy an apparently more active position. I thought for a very long time, trying to choose between the moves 16...♖d7 and 16...♖d6. I finally decided that the first of these would too 'crudely' urge White to play ♗h3, and settled for the latter.



**Vasiukov – Tal**
*USSR Ch, Baku 1961*

Later I found out that such a lengthy consideration had prompted my opponent to overestimate his position: he decided that Black must be experiencing difficulties.

And so: **16...♖d6 17 ♗h3 ♖xd2! 18 ♕xd2 ♖d8 19 ♕c1 ♖xd1 20 ♖xd1 ♕f6 21 ♗f5 g6 22 b4 axb4 23 cxb4 ♗e7 24 ♗d7 ♘d4 25 ♕xc7 ♗d8 26 ♕xb7 ♕xg5 27 ♗e8 ♕f6 28 a4 ♔f8 29 ♗b5 ♕d6 30 ♖c1 ♘xa4 31 ♔g2 ♘b6 32 ♖c5** *(D)*



Here White unexpectedly offered a draw, and, slightly confused, I forgot about the intended 32...♔g7, which would have given an easy win, and instantly replied **32...♕f6?** White gained counterplay which was sufficient for a draw: **33 ♕b8 ♕f3+ 34 ♔g1 ♕d1+ 35 ♔g2 ♕f3+ 36 ♔g1 ♘e6 37 ♖c6 ♕d1+ 38 ♔g2 ♕d4 39 ♖d6 ♕xe4+ 40 ♔g1 ♕b1+ 41 ♔g2**, and no resumption was required (½-½).

The following day, the same thing happened against Kots, except that he did not offer a draw.

As a result of all this, after 10 rounds I had scored two wins and 8(!!) draws, and taking into account the furious pace set by Spassky I was already unable to compete for first place. Realisation of this naturally did not improve my frame of mind, and in the middle of the tournament I very quickly dissipated my '+2', losing to Bronstein, and, in crushing style, to Nezhmetdinov.

It was this second game that shook me up. Returning to the hotel with Polugaevsky, I even bet him that I wouldn't draw a single one of my remaining games. There were six rounds to go, and Lev was surprised.

'What do you mean, you won't have any more draws?'

'Well, I just won't!!'

'What, are you intending to lose them all?'

'No!'

I won my bet, since my score in the concluding rounds was +5 −1 =0! The overall result was not so terrible: a share of 4th-5th places with Vasiukov. Later it was simply annoying to read in the press that Tal had played badly, whereas Vasiukov had achieved a great success.

Game 33

**Tal – Botvinnik**

*Moscow Wch match (1), 1960*

French Defence

**1 e4 e6**

Was this a surprise? In my opinion, no. At any event, when we were preparing for the match, my trainer Alexander Koblents and I had considered the adoption of the French Defence to be a very real possibility. Although in his second match with Smyslov (1957) this opening did not prove particularly successful for Botvinnik, the fact that he adhered so exceptionally to his creative principles gave every reason for thinking that he would not give up further tests of the French Defence, which had brought him so many glorious victories. The last 'French' game of theoretical significance was played between Gligorić and Petrosian in the Candidates Tournament (1959), and brought success in the opening to White. It stands to reason that we had studied this game, and were not averse to a repetition of the opening moves. Since it was also obvious that Botvinnik too had examined this game, in the opening of our very first encounter there began an unusual psychological duel. Before my second move I thought for a minute, remembering the numerous branches of this opening, and trying to guess which one my opponent had decided to choose.

**2 d4 d5**

**3 ♘c3 ♗b4**

The French Defence is one of the most complicated openings. For a long time the opening was thought to lead to a complicated manoeuvring

game without any immediate clashes, but by the efforts of Soviet theorists, in particular Rauzer (for White) and Botvinnik (for Black), ways were found of greatly sharpening the position.

In the variation adopted by Botvinnik in this game, Black parts with his dark-squared bishop, which weakens his kingside to a significant degree. As enduring compensation for this he gains pressure on White's somewhat compromised queenside. Many games begun with this opening have shown that, if White does not succeed in quickly taking the initiative, the weaknesses in his position will tell sooner or later. For this reason White players now aim to force events, in order to hinder the consolidation of the opponent's forces.

**4 e5 c5**

**5 a3 ♗xc3+**

Botvinnik chooses his approved continuation.

It is interesting to note that, in several games from his 1954 match with Smyslov, he retreated his bishop to a5. Grandmaster Smyslov does not like long forcing variations in the opening – after 5...♗a5 6 b4 cxd4 in the first and third games he continued 7 ♘b5, hoping in quiet play to exploit the active placing of his pieces. It has to be assumed that Botvinnik considered this variation to be perfectly acceptable for Black, since in the ninth game of the same match he again played 5...♗a5, but this time (after home preparation) Smyslov chose the sharper 7 ♕g4!?, and after 7...♘e7 8 bxa5 dxc3 9 ♕xg7 ♖g8 10 ♕xh7 ♘d7 (10...♘bc6 is much more active) 11 ♘f3 ♘f8 12 ♕d3 ♕xa5 13 h4! he gained a significant advantage and won brilliantly. Botvinnik again employed this variation in a game with Unzicker at the Amsterdam Olympiad, 1954. However, on this occasion he did not 'squander' his kingside pawns, preferring the more cautious 7...♔f8, but in this game too he gained an indifferent position from the opening.

It was evidently because of 7 ♕g4 that Botvinnik gave up 5...♗a5, although even here the last word has certainly not been said. From this point of view, the game Matanović-Mititelu (Zonal Tournament, Budapest 1960) is of great interest. It should be mentioned, incidentally, that in recent times the move ♕g4 has become something of a 'visiting card' for White in the French Defence, in cases where he is striving for the maximum from the opening.

**6 bxc3 ♕c7** *(D)*

This move also has an interesting history. 6...♘e7 looks more flexible, since the king's knight has to be developed on this square, whereas in some cases the black queen can occupy a5, and later a4. With the thematic 7 ♕g4 White again provokes complications, on which chess theory has not yet given a final evaluation. If my memory does not betray me, the last time

Botvinnik played 6...♘e7 was in his game with Alexander (USSR-Great Britain Radio Match, 1947). The English master continued 7 ♕g4 cxd4 8 ♕xg7 ♖g8 9 ♕xh7 ♕a5 10 ♖b1 and after a complicated struggle he won the game. Later grandmaster Geller suggested the even stronger continuation 8 ♗d3, and he successfully employed it to gain a brilliant win over Sokolsky (18th USSR Championship). In recent times the efforts of Black devotees in this variation have been aimed at improving the defence with 7...0-0 or 7...♘f5. Botvinnik aims for immediate play in the centre.

**7 ♕g4**

'There is nothing new under the sun'. This variation too has occurred in several of my opponent's games. After 7 ♘f3 the play would have been complicated enough, but insufficiently sharp. For the moment White is threatening to destroy Black's kingside.

**7 ... f5**

7...♘e7 8 ♕xg7 ♖g8 9 ♕xh7 cxd4 would merely have led to a transposition of moves. Now the idea of Black's 6th move becomes clear – the g7-pawn is defended. Since the *en passant* capture 8 exf6 ♘xf6 would merely have confirmed the well known rule, which features in all chess primers – that it is unfavourable to develop the queen at the start of the game – White, naturally, continues ...

**8 ♕g3 ♘e7**

With this last move Black emphasises that he is not at all afraid of the capture on g7. To avoid this he could have first exchanged in the centre: 8...cxd4 9 cxd4, and only then played 9...♘e7, after which 10 ♕xg7?? loses to 10...♖g8 11 ♕xh7 ♕c3+.

In particular, this is what Botvinnik himself played in his game with Reshevsky (Match-Tournament for the World Championship, 1948). White continued 10 ♗d2 0-0 11 ♗d3 b6 12 ♘e2 ♗a6 13 ♘f4 and obtained a good attacking position. Later, it is true, Botvinnik succeeded in repelling the attack with accurate defence and even in winning the game, but even so there are few players to whom the resulting position appeals, since White acquires an appreciable positional plus: his dark-squared bishop, which for the moment is operating only on one diagonal, can make its way via d2 to b4, where it will be much more actively placed.

'The last of the Mohicans' trying to uphold this variation with Black is

now a gifted young player from East Germany – Reinhardt Fuchs. He has twice employed this continuation against Soviet players – with Spassky in the Student World Championship in Varna (1958) and with Vasiukov (Gotha 1957), but both times he was crushed in about 25 moves.

**9 ♕xg7**

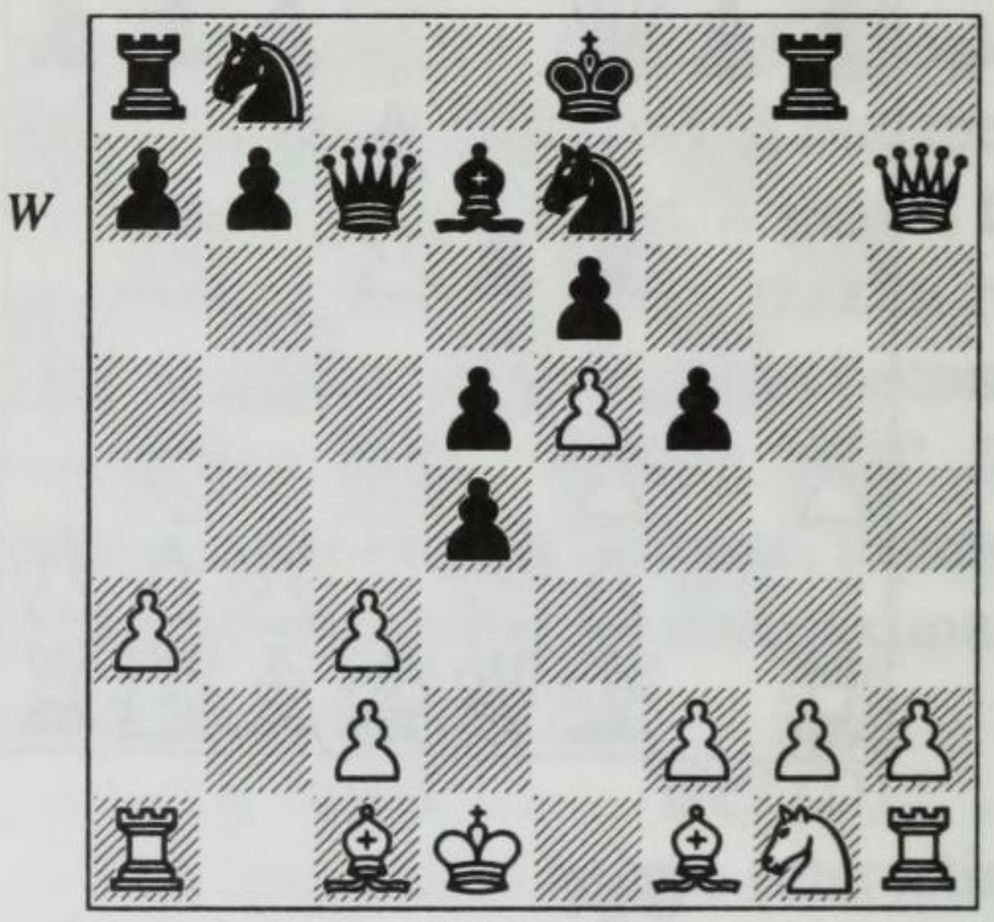
In the 14th game of his match with Botvinnik (1957), Smyslov avoided the complications by playing 9 ♗d2. In this case Black developed his forces as in the above-mentioned game with Reshevsky, and gained a good position thanks to the passive placing of White's queen's bishop. I am convinced that, if White wants to gain an opening advantage, he should on no account reject this type of double-edged continuation, which is always the most critical and usually the strongest.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **9** | **...** | **♖g8** |
| **10** | **♕xh7** | **cxd4** |
| **11** | **♔d1!?** | |

Twenty years ago a chess commentator would have been horrified by such a move. At the very start of the game the white king voluntarily embarks on a journey. Now, however, few are surprised by this eccentric continuation. For the moment White prefers to camouflage his plans for the development of his king's knight, retaining the option of it going either to e2 or to f3, and he also leaves clear the f1-a6 diagonal. For the moment the loss of the right to castle is not important, since, firstly, the opponent's pieces are insufficiently developed, and secondly, at e8 the black king too is not very comfortable.

As far as I recall, the only game in which 11 ♔d1 (recommended by Euwe, incidentally) has been tested was the above-mentioned Gligorić-Petrosian game. The Soviet grandmaster continued with the straightforward 11...♘bc6 12 ♘f3 ♘xe5, and after the very strong move 13 ♗g5! he ended up in a difficult position (13...♘xf3 fails to 14 ♗b5+!). The possibility of significantly strengthening Black's play had not escaped Botvinnik's keen analytical searching.

**11 ... ♗d7** *(D)*



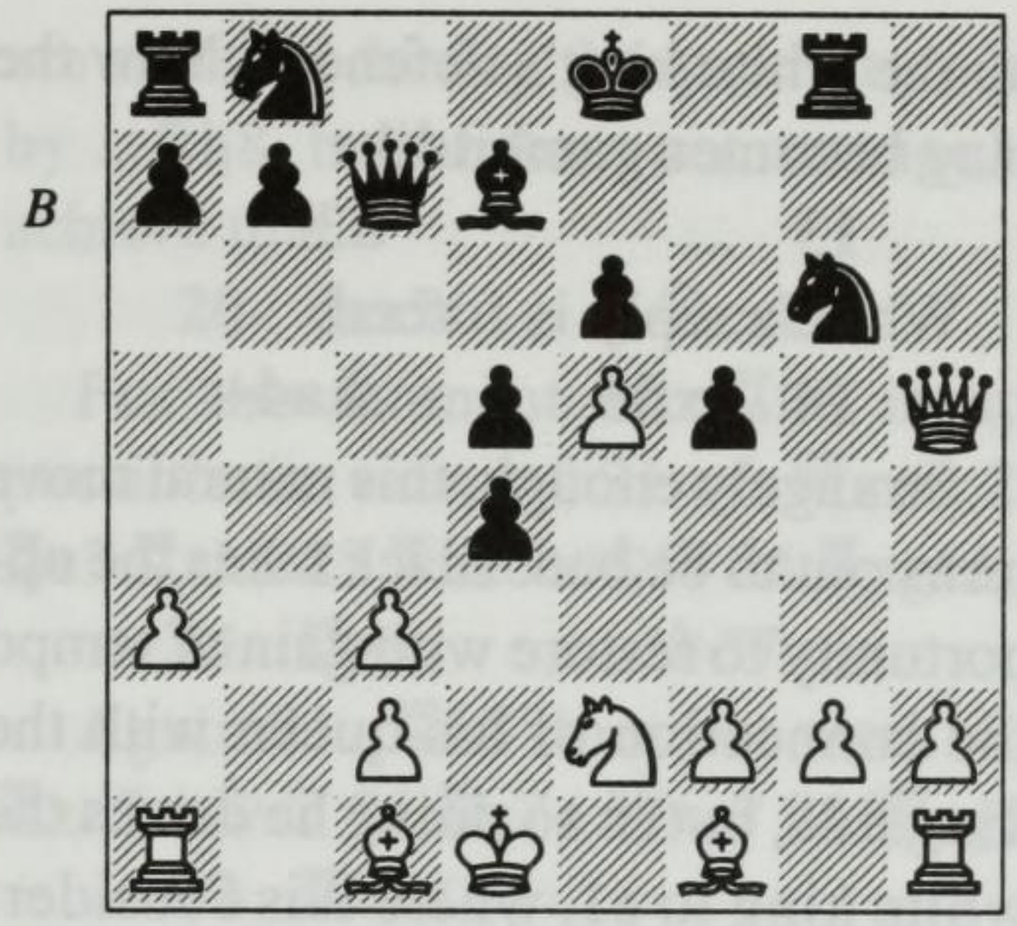

A very cunning move, by which Black hopes to exploit the offensive power of the queen at c7, in order to emphasise the vulnerable position of the white king. The pieces have to be developed in any case, but first it is best to bring out the bishop. If White now plays 12 ♘f3, then after 12...♗a4

13 ♗d3 ♕xc3 his position immediately becomes critical. In the event of 12 ♘e2 Black can again continue 12...♗a4, with the unpleasant threat of 13...d3. It is apparent, therefore, that the move 11...♗d7 simultaneously pursues two aims: a strategic one – the completion of development and queenside castling, and a tactical one – a blow against c2. If White does not want to come under a strong attack, he must play very actively. There is a basis for this. With 7...f5 Black has rid himself of his f7-pawn, the guarding of which is an unpleasant role often undertaken by the king itself, but on the other hand he has weakened the h5-e8 diagonal, which exposes the king and deprives any black pieces that end up on this diagonal of 'material' support. In addition, the white queen can now return home with gain of tempo.

**12 ♕h5+ ♘g6**

If 12...♔d8, to avoid the pin, I was intending 13 ♗g5, aiming for an attack. With the move played Black launches a 'trial balloon', to see whether White will be satisfied with a draw after 13 ♕h7 ♘e7 14 ♕h5+.

**13 ♘e2** *(D)*



Clearly, such an agreement to a draw would have been a humiliating creative defeat. It would have signified an admission that I was rattled after my opponent's very first innovation.

With his 13th move White strives to exploit the pin. For the moment he is threatening 14 ♘f4, and if 14...♔f7, then either the quiet 15 ♗d3 or the sharper 15 g4. Now it is Black who has to worry about his king. Botvinnik spent more than half an hour considering his next move, from which it can be concluded that not all the subtleties of the variation had been taken into account in his home laboratory. 13...♕xe5 14 cxd4 or 13...dxc3 14 ♘f4 ♔f7 15 ♗d3 (much stronger than Vuković's recommendation 15 ♕h7+) with a number of unpleasant threats (possible, for example, is the variation 15...♘c6 16 ♗xf5 exf5 17 e6+ ♗xe6 18 ♕h7+ ♖g7 19 ♕xg7+!) could not in any way satisfy Black. The straightforward 13...♗a4 runs into the following refutation: 14 ♘f4 ♕xc3 15 ♗d3 ♕xa1 16 ♘xg6 ♘c6 17 ♘f4+! (this is stronger than the line I considered during the game: 17 ♘e7+ ♔d7! 18 ♘xg8 ♖xg8 with double-edged play). 13...♘c6 14 cxd4 ♖c8 15 ♖a2 would also not have solved Black's problems.

Botvinnik chooses the best continuation, giving up another pawn to break

up the white king's defences. Now the play becomes gambit-like.

**13 ... d3!**

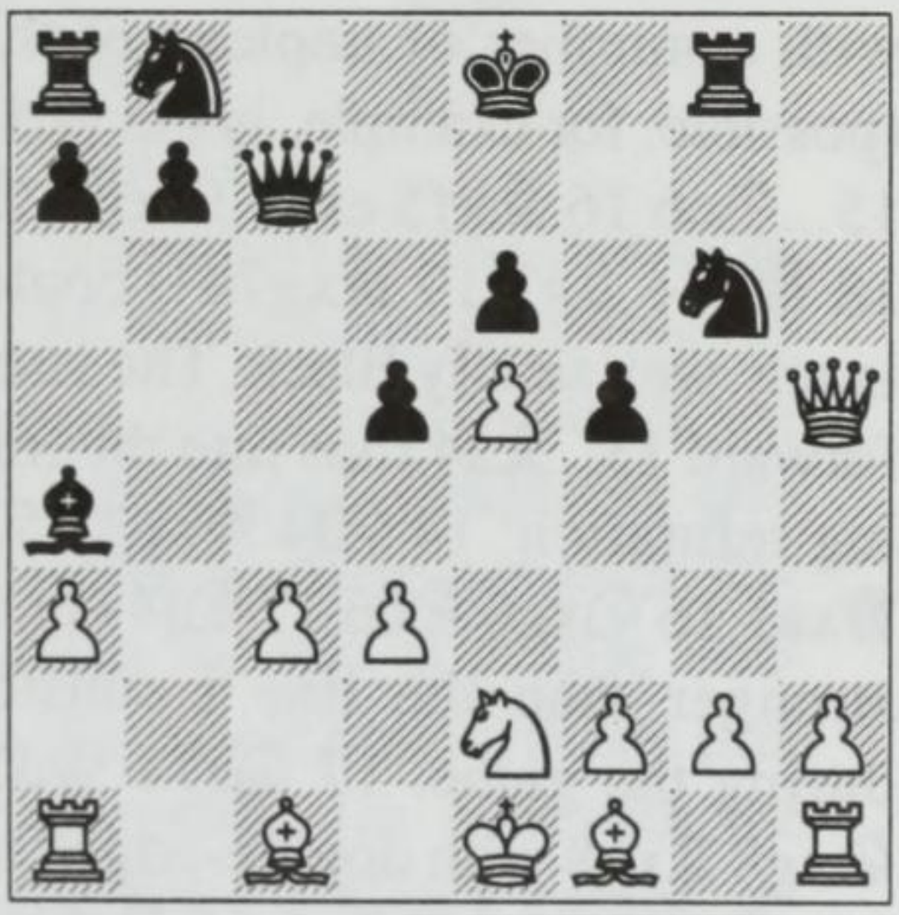
White's reply is forced.

**14 cxd3 ♗a4+**

Strangely enough, this natural move turns out to be bad. Black takes the opportunity to restore with gain of tempo the connection of his queen with the kingside, but in so doing he drives the white king to e1, where it is considerably more secure.

Things would have been much more difficult for White after the simple 14...♘c6 followed by queenside castling. The white king, whose defences on the queenside are very shaky, would have had to waste a tempo on moving to the opposite flank via e1. After 14...♘c6 I think that Black would have had very real compensation for the two sacrificed pawns.

**15 ♔e1** *(D)*



*B*

**15 ... ♕xe5**

It is quite understandable that Black should try to regain at least part of the sacrificed material, but with this move he loses a great deal of time. 15...♘c6 would have been more in the spirit of the chosen plan. Here, it is true, this move is less strong, since White can continue 16 f4 0-0-0 17 ♗d2, and then gradually free his kingside pieces. Sooner or later Black would have to sacrifice a knight on e5. The subsequent events are difficult to anticipate, but at any event Black would have held the initiative. 15...♗b5, suggested by the Czech master Podgorny, looks tempting, but with 16 ♗g5! ♗xd3 17 ♔d2 White seizes the initiative.

**16 ♗g5!**

The main task now facing White is to keep the black king in the centre. In this case the loss of the e5-pawn will be to his advantage, since he may be able to create dangerous threats on the open e-file. It is this factor that gives rise to White's unusual plan, involving the 'lateral' development of the rooks.

**16 ... ♘c6**

The attempt to fight for the initiative by 16...f4 does not work in view of 17 d4 ♕f5 18 ♘xf4 ♕c2 19 ♘e2.

**17 d4 ♕c7**

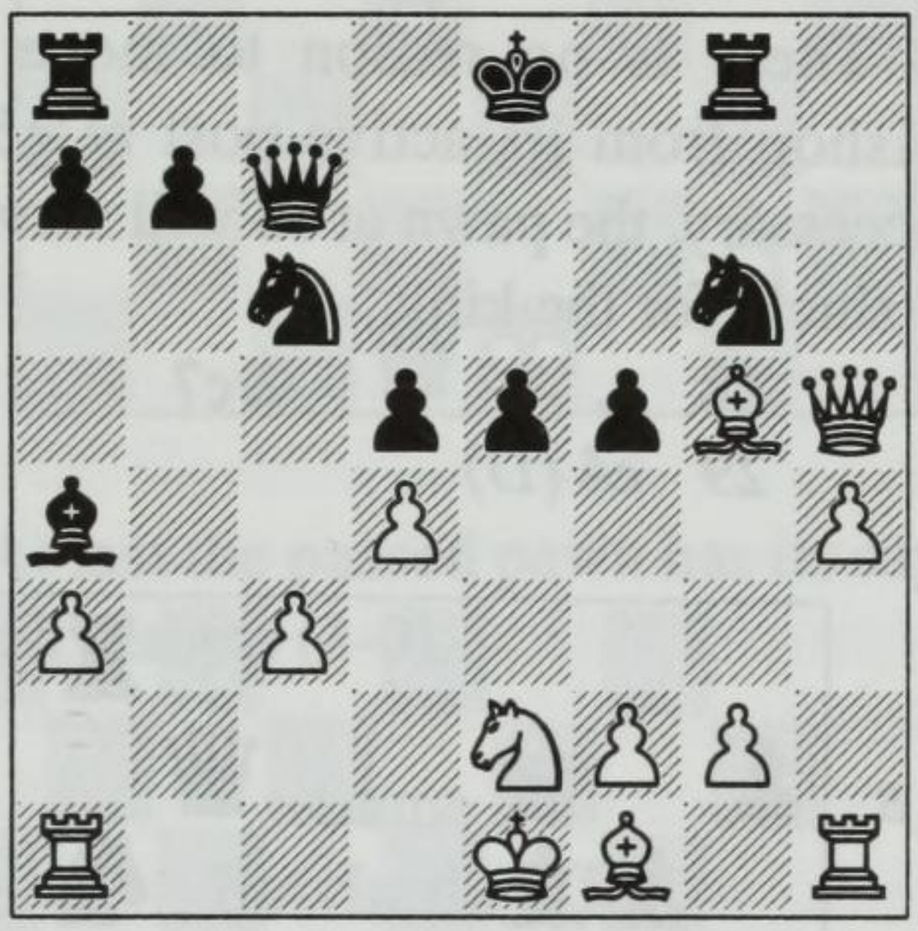
After 17...♕e4 18 ♖c1! the black queen in the centre of the board would have been restricted. Going into an endgame by 17...♕h8 18 ♘f4 also could not have satisfied Black.

**18 h4!**

Not in order to try and realise the extra pawn (although this too plays its part), but with the aim of bringing the

king's rook into play as quickly as possible in anticipation of events coming to a head in the centre. Slower continuations allow Black, by playing ...♘ce7 and preparing queenside castling, to obtain a dynamic position. Now, however, there is no time for 18...♘ce7, since White simply exchanges on e7 (19 ♗xe7 ♕xe7) and by continuing 20 ♕g5 takes the play along very prosaic lines. Therefore, Black is forced to meet the danger by opening lines.

**18 ... e5** *(D)*



**19 ♖h3**

Bringing the reserves into play and at the same time parrying the threat of 19...exd4 20 cxd4 ♘xd4.

**19 ... ♕f7**

Here 19...e4 was also possible. In this case Black's position would be quite solid, but also White would not be threatened in any way, and he could without hindrance go about the realisation of his extra pawn. 19...f4 20 ♕g4 was also bad. All Black's efforts are aimed at driving the queen from h5 by ...♖h8, but he does not manage to achieve this.

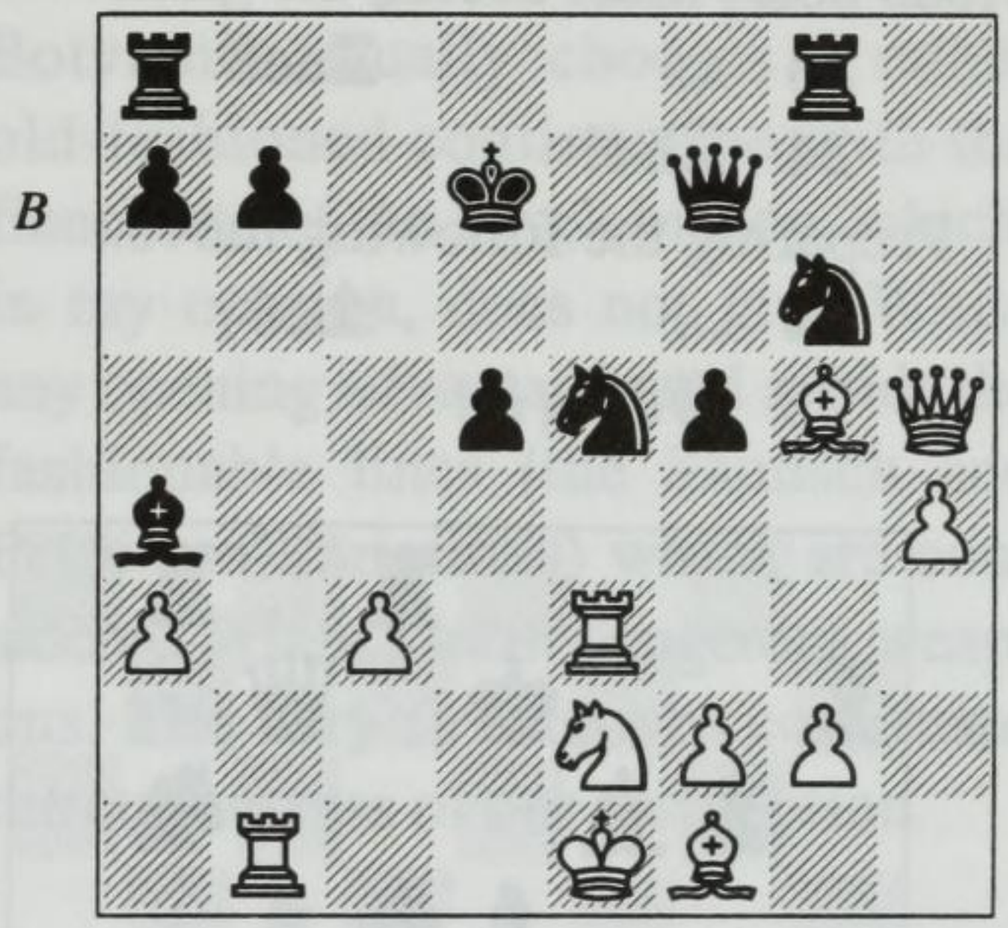
**20 dxe5 ♘cxe5**

For the moment 20...♖h8 is not possible in view of 21 e6 ♕xe6 22 ♖e3 ♖xh5 23 ♖xe6+ ♔f7 24 ♖xg6!

**21 ♖e3 ♔d7**

Again 21...♖h8 does not work: 22 ♖xe5+ ♔d7 23 ♖e7+ ♕xe7 24 ♕xg6.

**22 ♖b1** *(D)*



White's queen's rook also comes into play in a not altogether usual way; for the moment the b7-pawn is attacked.

**22 ... b6**

It is hard to imagine that, with the white queen at h5, the weakening of the a6-square can play some part, but nevertheless this is so.

Things would have been more difficult for White after 22...♗c6. I was intending to sacrifice the exchange, transposing into a not unfavourable ending: 23 ♘d4 f4 24 ♖xe5! ♘xe5 25 ♕xf7+ ♘xf7 26 ♗xf4 ♖ae8+ 27

♔d2, but this would have been the lesser evil for Black. The move 22...b6 has another drawback – by exploiting the bishop's position at a4, White gains an important tempo for the development of his rook.

**23 ♘f4**

The white pieces uncoil like a compressed spring. If now Black plays 23...♖h8, then after 24 ♘xg6 ♘xg6 25 ♕e2 the threat of ♕a6 (cf. the previous note) must decide the game.

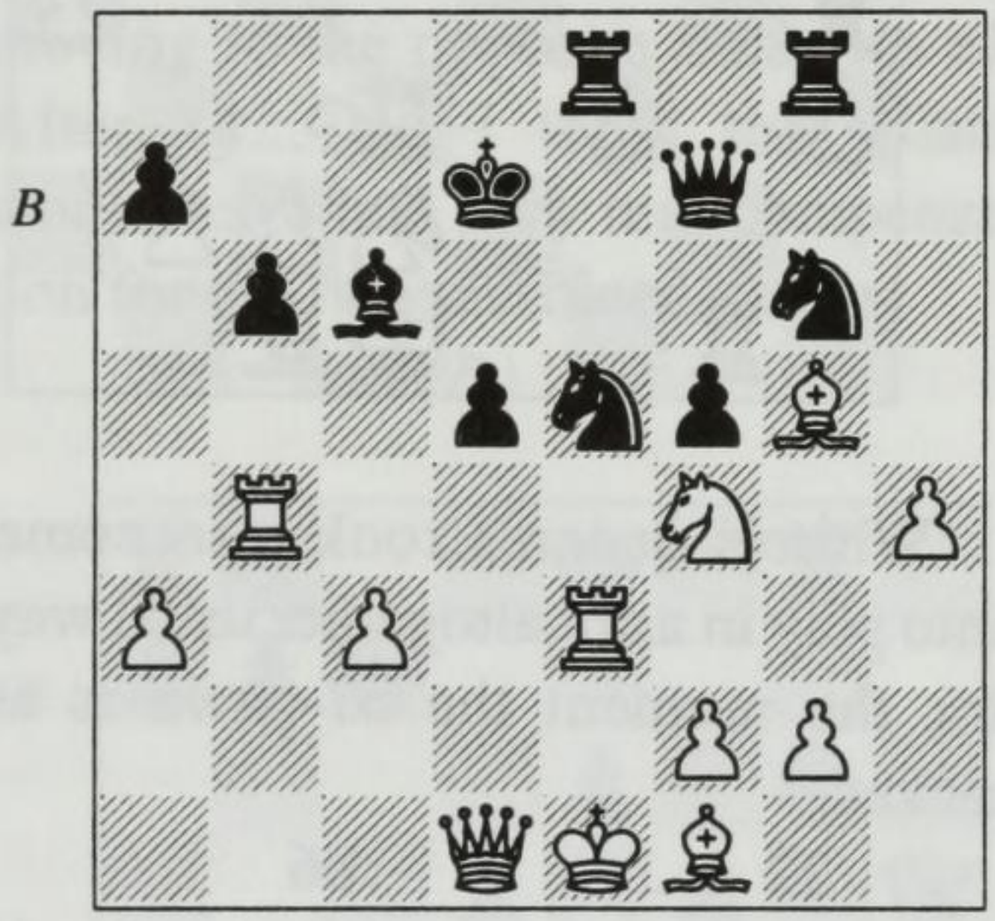
**23 ... ♖ae8**

**24 ♖b4!**

Preparing the following move.

**24 ... ♗c6**

**25 ♕d1!** *(D)*



'The queen has done her duty, she can go'. Black did not in fact play ...♖h8. A rather picturesque position has arisen: after lengthy wanderings White's king and queen have returned to their appointed places, the light-squared bishop has not made a single move, and yet Black's position is very difficult – White is not only a sound pawn to the good, but also his pieces are extremely active, in particular his rooks, which very effectively control the centre. The imposing mass of black pieces in this part of the board turns out in fact to be harmless.

**25 ... ♘xf4**

Also after 25...♘g4 26 ♖e2 or 26 ♖xe8 ♖xe8+ 27 ♗e2 Black would be virtually lost.

**26 ♖xf4 ♘g6**

**27 ♖d4 ♖xe3+**

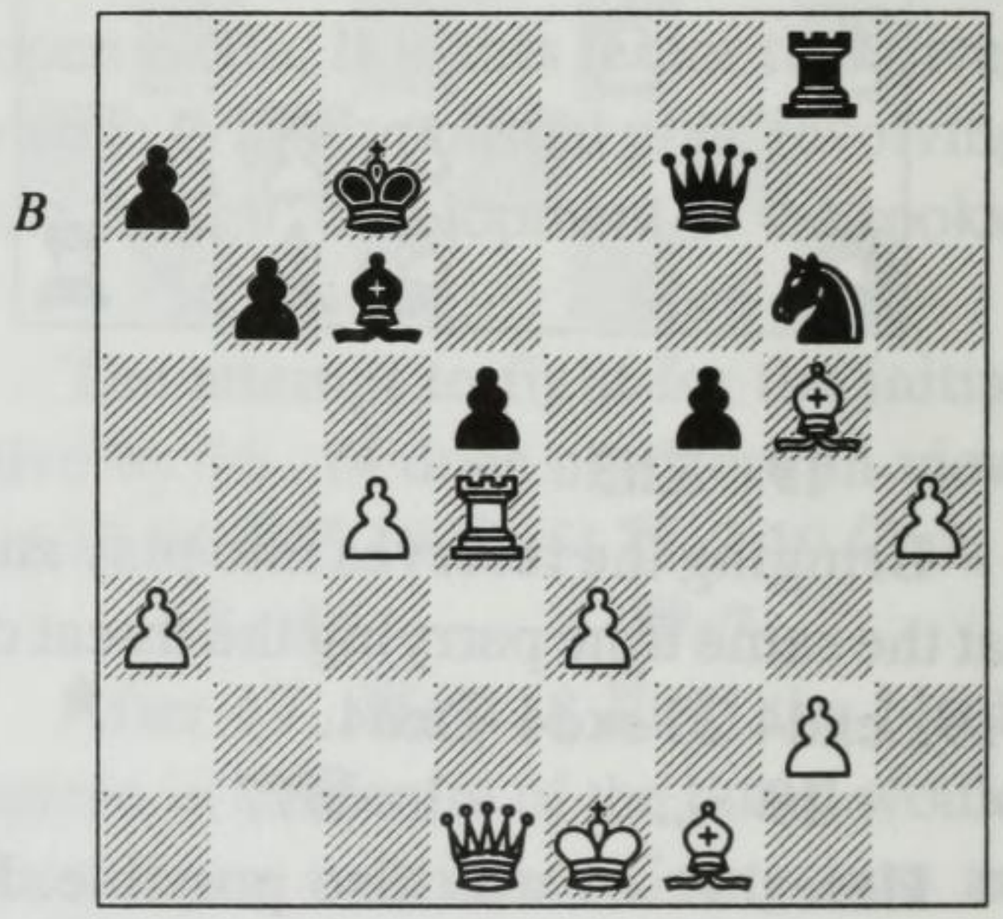
If 27...f4, then the reply 28 ♕g4+ is decisive.

**28 fxe3**

There is no reason to move the bishop from its active post at g5. If necessary, the pawn at e3 will serve as a shield for the king.

**28 ... ♔c7**

**29 c4** *(D)*

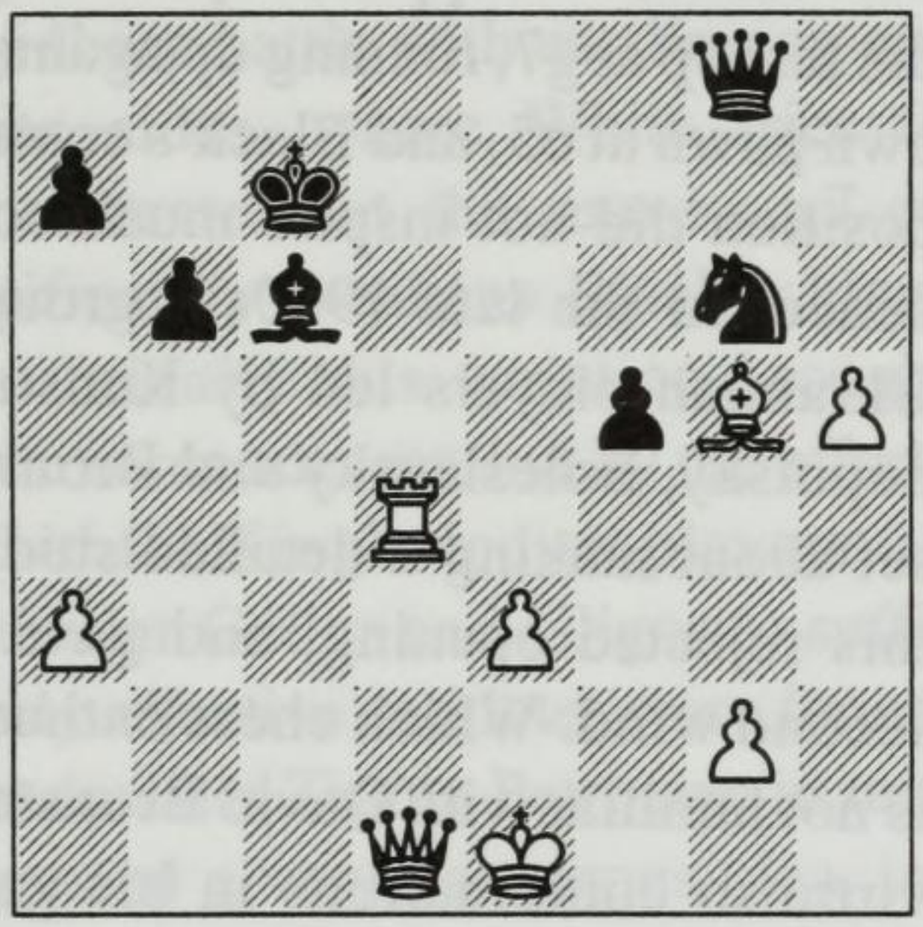


This leads by force to gain of material. If 29...♘e7 White continues 30 cxd5 ♗xd5 (or 30...♘xd5 31 ♗c4) 31 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 32 ♕c1+, not allowing Black any chances.

**29 ... dxc4**
**30 ♗xc4 ♕g7**
**31 ♗xg8**

Not at all a bad route for the light-squared bishop, which has only just come into game.

**31 ... ♕xg8**
**32 h5** *(D)*




At last the passed pawn has its say. Black resigns (**1-0**).

Game 34
**Botvinnik – Tal**
*Moscow Wch (6), 1960*
King's Indian Defence

Although it had given me a one-point advantage, the start of the match had not completely satisfied me. In the last four games my opponent had been able to direct the play along his favourite channels and had invariably held the initiative. To expect that I would be able to continue gaining draws after prolonged defence would have been highly frivolous. Therefore we decided at all costs to change the character of the play. Once again the already tiresome question was on the agenda: which opening to play? Both the Nimzo-Indian Defence and the Modern Benoni had in general not produced the desired effect. There remained one more double-edged opening – the classical King's Indian Defence, and it was this that we chose. A definite role in this was played by the fact that against the King's Indian Botvinnik usually chooses a rather old-fashioned continuation with the fianchetto of the king's bishop, which, in my opinion, does not give White any opening advantage, and avoids the fashionable lines (the Sämisch and Petrosian Variations) which are considered White's most dangerous weapons. The very first moves confirmed the correctness of our assumption.

**1 c4**

This, along with 1 d4, is Botvinnik's favourite move. The aim of it, in particular, is to avoid undesirable opening lines, such as the Nimzo-Indian Defence, for example. Thus after 1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 White can, say, continue 3 ♘f3, delaying d2-d4. In the event of 1...e5 a Sicilian Defence arises with colours reversed, where the extra tempo naturally plays an important role. By maintaining the symmetry with 1...c5 Black can take play into the English Opening, but it is well known that Botvinnik plays it in masterly style with both White and Black.

After a little thought, Black decided to make a move that leaves the question open.

**1 ... ♘f6**

**2 ♘f3**

To some extent White declares his intentions. He emphasises that he does not intend to play the Nimzo-Indian Defence, nor in the King's Indian Defence to play the sharp Sämisch Variation, in which, as is known, a basic element of White's play is the propping-up of his centre by f2-f3. At the same time Botvinnik avoids a variation that was popular in the recent past – a branch of the English Opening which was still possible after 2 ♘c3 g6 3 g3 ♗g7 4 ♗g2 0-0 5 e4 d6 6 ♘ge2. White follows up with d2-d3 and then, depending on which black pawn takes part in the battle for the centre – ...c5 or ...e5 – he begins attacking it either in the first case by a2-a3 and b2-b4, or in the second case by f2-f4. However, experience has shown that Black's control of d4 gives him a quite comfortable position, and in particular Smyslov scored a very logical win in the first game of his match with Botvinnik in 1957. Botvinnik tried this variation again with White against Gurgenidze in the 2nd USSR Spartakiad (1959), but in this case too Black gained satisfactory play from the opening.

Now, however, this variation is not possible, since White has developed his king's knight at f3.

**2 ... g6**

The King's Indian Defence has an interesting history. It received wide recognition some twenty years ago. Before that the opening was only employed from time to time and, so to speak, spontaneously. In particular, such a set-up was chosen long ago by Chigorin, but White's superiority in the centre, the apparent passivity of the bishop at g7, running up against its own pawn at e5, and Black's cramped position did not inspire much confidence. In the late 1930s a group of Ukrainian players led by Konstantinopolsky, Boleslavsky and Bronstein set about making a detailed study of this rejected opening, and gave it a second wind. Which chess enthusiast is not familiar with David Bronstein's virtuoso combinations in his games against Pachman and Zita (Moscow v. Prague match, 1946), in which the 'inactive' bishop at g7 carried out its destructive work? For this, it is true, Black sacrificed 'only' a rook. Which chess enthusiast has not been enraptured by the brilliant ideas of the King's Indian devotees' 'younger brother', the Odessa grandmaster Yefim Geller, in whose hands this opening has become a formidable weapon?

New systems of development for Black appeared, and the move ...e7-e5 ceased to be obligatory; in many games Black attacked the centre with ...c7-c5, or sometimes altogether avoided moving his c- and e-pawns, preferring piece pressure on the centre with ...♘c6 and ...♗g4. The idea of

immediate counterplay on the queenside with ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5 also appeared. As a rule, Black was able to carry out all these ideas most successfully with the white king's bishop at g2, and so players of the King's Indian for White also began employing other set-ups. They revived the Sämisch Variation, which usually leads to a very sharp battle with castling on opposite sides, where White tries to demonstrate that the move ...g7-g6 significantly weakens Black's kingside. Initially this variation brought White some success, but by the efforts of faithful King's Indian players (in particular Geller and Gligorić) sufficiently effective antidotes were found. Grandmaster Tigran Petrosian in turn suggested a very dangerous idea, involving the development of the bishop at g5 (from where it hinders Black's counterplay on the kingside), followed by the advance of the white pawns on the opposite wing, with the aim of opening lines. For the moment the last word for Black in this variation belongs to the talented Ukrainian master Leonid Stein, who played ...h7-h6 before ♗g5 and thereby nipped White's idea in the bud, true, at the cost of a tempo. All the same, recent events have shown that the fashion for the King's Indian Defence has begun to pass, and even such devotees as Petrosian, Bronstein and Geller have frequently chosen other set-ups. Perhaps this has happened because its novelty has faded, perhaps because White's play has become more purposeful, but in any case it is far too early to write off the King's Indian Defence, since, even if does give White a slight advantage, Black achieves just as viable a position as in any other opening.

**3 g3 ♗g7**
**4 ♗g2 0-0**
**5 d4**

White gradually determines his pawn configuration. Here or a couple of moves later he still had the possibility of playing d2-d3, giving the game a closed character. It must be assumed that Botvinnik did not want to define the play so sharply, since in this variation White gains the initiative on the queenside, but Black gains a counterattack on the kingside. My opponent probably did not want to allow such a possibility right from the opening, especially since several recent games, the most memorable of them being Pirc-Boleslavsky (USSR v. Yugoslavia, Leningrad 1957), have confirmed its effectiveness. Now Black has to decide which variation to choose. He can switch to the Grünfeld Defence with 5...d5, but I have only played it very rarely and feel insufficiently at home in these positions. The attempt to switch to a symmetrical set-up with 5...c6 followed by ...d7-d5 leads to a dull game with a slight advantage for White.

**5 ... d6**
**6 ♘c3 ♘bd7**

Another committal move. Black demonstrates his intention to play the

King's Indian in its 'original' form. This was the variation used when it began being played in important tournaments. In many games I have preferred the set-ups with 6...c5 and 6...♘c6. The continuation chosen here has occurred much more rarely in my games, and we assumed that Botvinnik would be correspondingly less prepared for it.

**7 0-0 e5**

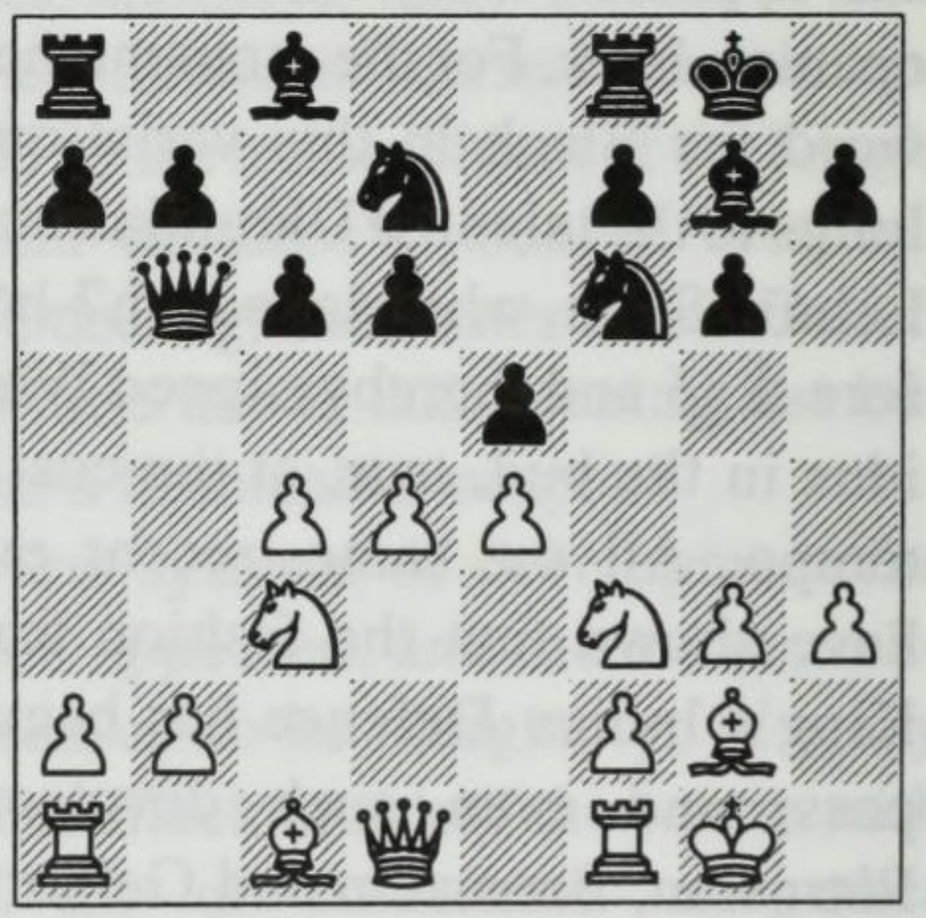
**8 e4 c6**

The most flexible. Black does not object to the closing of the centre, since in this case his knight obtains a comfortable post at c5 and, in addition, with the centre closed his hands are freed for play on the kingside – his knight moves from f6 to e8 or h5, making way for the f-pawn. The immediate capture on d4 promises a definite advantage for White, who gains more freedom in the centre and on the kingside.

**9 h3**

In many games Botvinnik tried to demonstrate that this move, defending the bishop at e3 against attack, is a waste of time, and he preferred the immediate 9 ♗e3, but in the 14th game of the Botvinnik-Smyslov match (1954) Black found a convincing reply to this move-order. He played 9...♘g4 10 ♗g5 ♕b6! 11 h3 exd4! 12 ♘a4 ♕a6 13 hxg4 b5 14 ♘xd4 bxa4 15 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 16 e5 ♕xc4 17 ♗xa8 ♘xe5 and in a sharp battle Smyslov gained the advantage. The prophylactic move 9 h3 is after all necessary. White's plans include the harmonious development of his pieces in the region of the centre, and if sooner or later he should succeed in forcing the opponent to exchange on d4, he will gain the opportunity to exert pressure on the weak d6-pawn. Black has usually based his counterplay on the long-range bishop at g7, but with careful play White is able to neutralise it. Such a course has occurred many times in games where Black has exchanged immediately on d4 or continued 9...a5 and ...♖e8. Black's difficulties in this variation prompted him to begin searching for more active continuations, one of which (incidentally, also of Ukrainian origin) is the text-move. During recent years 9...♕a5, with similar ideas, has also become popular, but since I had already employed this move in tournament games, I did not want to repeat it in the match.

**9 ... ♕b6** *(D)*



Black immediately begins action against d4. Now he is threatening a

familiar combination, namely 10...exd4 11 ♘xd4 ♘xe4! At the same time he sets his 'sights' on the c4-pawn (by 10...♕b4). Thus if White wants to maintain the tension in the centre, he has to reckon with numerous counter-ideas by Black. It should not be forgotten that in some cases (after an eventual ...♘g4) the queen at b6 can create threats to the f2-pawn. Our choice of opening proved psychologically successful. Botvinnik again avoids double-edged tactical continuations, and prefers the immediate closing of the centre, hoping to gain time by attacking the queen. The other way of relieving the tension in the centre, 10 dxe5, gives White little – Black obtains a comfortable outpost at d4, and the queen can return to its usual position at e7 via b4.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **10** | **d5** | **cxd5** |
| **11** | **cxd5** | **♘c5** |

The first virtue of the plan selected by Black is evident: his knight has occupied an active position and is already attacking a pawn.

**12 ♘e1** *(D)*

During the game I assumed that this was a theoretical innovation. More common here is 12 ♖e1 or 12 ♘d2, in order to transfer the knight to c4 with gain of tempo. In this case, however, Black retains freedom of action and can initiate play both on the queenside by preparing ...b7-b5 and ...♗a6, and on the kingside by advancing ...f7-f5.

Later, however, I learned that 12 ♘e1 had been played by Petrosian in a game with Shiyanovsky in a USSR Championship Semi-final (Kiev 1957) which he won quickly (true, the virtues of the move 12 ♘e1 were nothing to do with this).

White does not intend to tolerate for long the 'annoying' knight at c5 and prepares to exchange it. The role of the piece that will gain a tempo is assigned to the bishop at c1. Nevertheless, 12 ♘e1 has the drawback that White loses a certain amount of time and the opponent is able to complete his development unhindered. This is precisely what Shiyanovsky forgot to do in the above-mentioned game, deciding instead to try and conclude matters immediately with an attack on the kingside.

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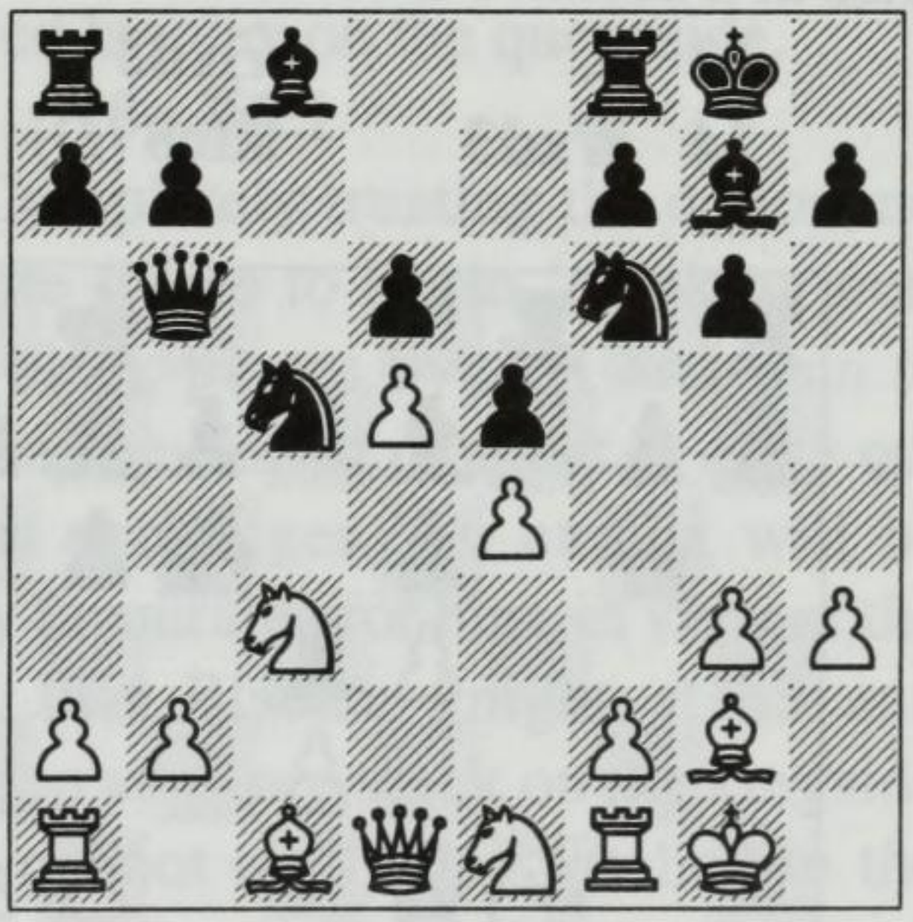
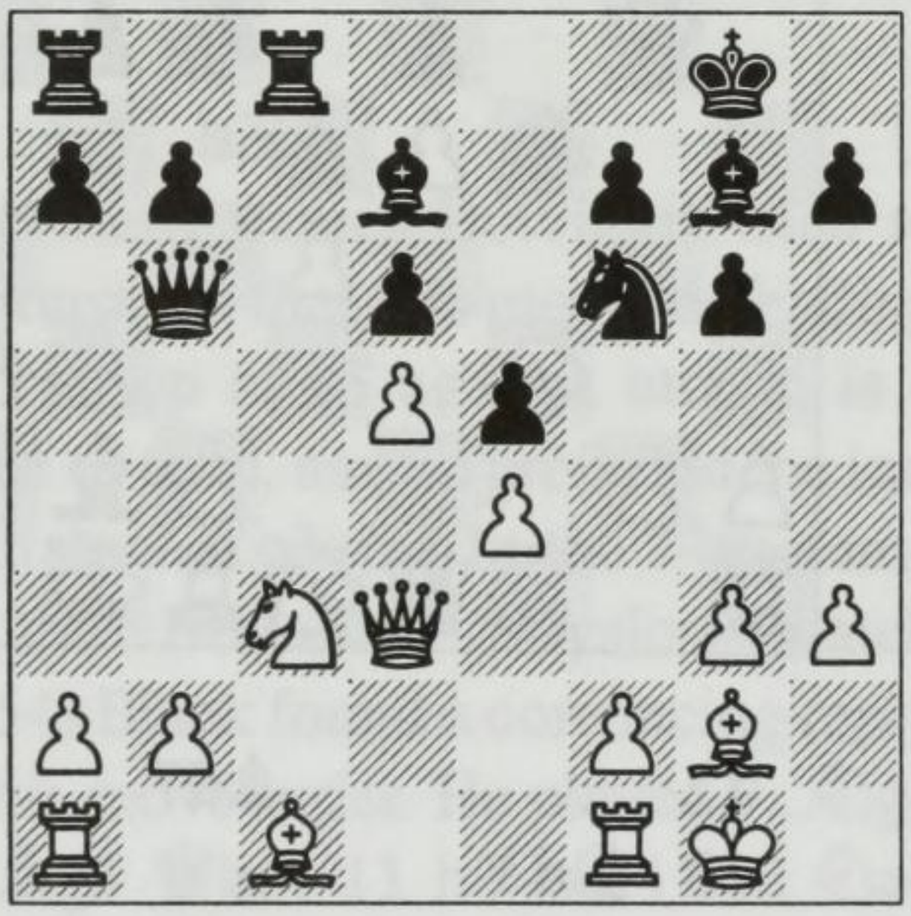


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | **...** | **♗d7** |
| **13** | **♘d3** | |

Botvinnik is of the opinion that frequent appearances in tournaments are not so essential. Of course, the methods of working during a preparation period are a matter of taste for every

player. At the same time, modern chess has now reached such a high level that knowledge and ability alone are insufficient. Every game demands an enormous output of nervous energy, and therefore regular (more or less frequent) participation in competitions is necessary for a player to keep in form. The text-move, or, more precisely, the time spent on it, demonstrate that Botvinnik had not played competitive chess for a long time. On the quite obvious and undoubtedly strongest continuation of the manoeuvre begun with the previous move, did he really have to spend ten minutes out of his overall budget of two and a half hours? How many times has a player lacked precisely these ten minutes at a decisive moment!

**13 ... ♘xd3**
**14 ♕xd3 ♖fc8** *(D)*



*W*

The critical position. Here Black spent a long time deciding which plan to adopt in the middlegame. He wanted to play ...f7-f5, which gains in strength with the pawns at h3 and g3, since White's kingside is to some extent weakened. However, the straightforward 14...♘h5 does not achieve its aim in view of 15 ♗e3 ♕d8 16 ♕e2!, and now after 16...f5 17 exf5 Black has to reconcile himself to a positionally difficult game after 17...♗xf5. I did not want to prepare ...f7-f5 by 14...♘e8, as I was afraid that the queenside would be inadequately defended. Nevertheless, a more detailed analysis shows that this continuation deserved serious consideration. After 14...♘e8 15 ♗e3 ♕d8 for the moment White cannot create any real threats on the queenside, and ...f7-f5 can be played without hindrance. Whether this continuation gives anything real after, for example, 16 ♖ac1 f5 17 exf5 gxf5 18 f4 – that is another question. All the same, the bishop at g7 comes actively into the game. Black (also partly on psychological grounds) decided for the moment to play on the queenside, and then, having dulled the opponent's vigilance, to advance ...f7-f5 at a convenient moment. I have to admit that at this point I was already seized with the idea of the knight sacrifice at f4, which, however, was still very hazy. Black moved to c8 with his king's rook, firstly, to keep his a7-pawn defended, and secondly, to show White that he was not even thinking about the kingside.

**15 ♖b1**

A highly revealing manoeuvre. White takes the opponent at his word,

and also concentrates on queenside play. He intends ♗e3, but with this aim the immediate 15 ♕e2 was also possible, which at the same time would have prevented ...♘h5 followed by ...f7-f5. The position of the rook at b1 will later give Black a very important tempo.

**15 ... ♘h5**

Now the opponent can also be disturbed on the other wing. It transpires that, for the advance of the f-pawn, the support of the rook is not after all so necessary.

**16 ♗e3 ♕b4**

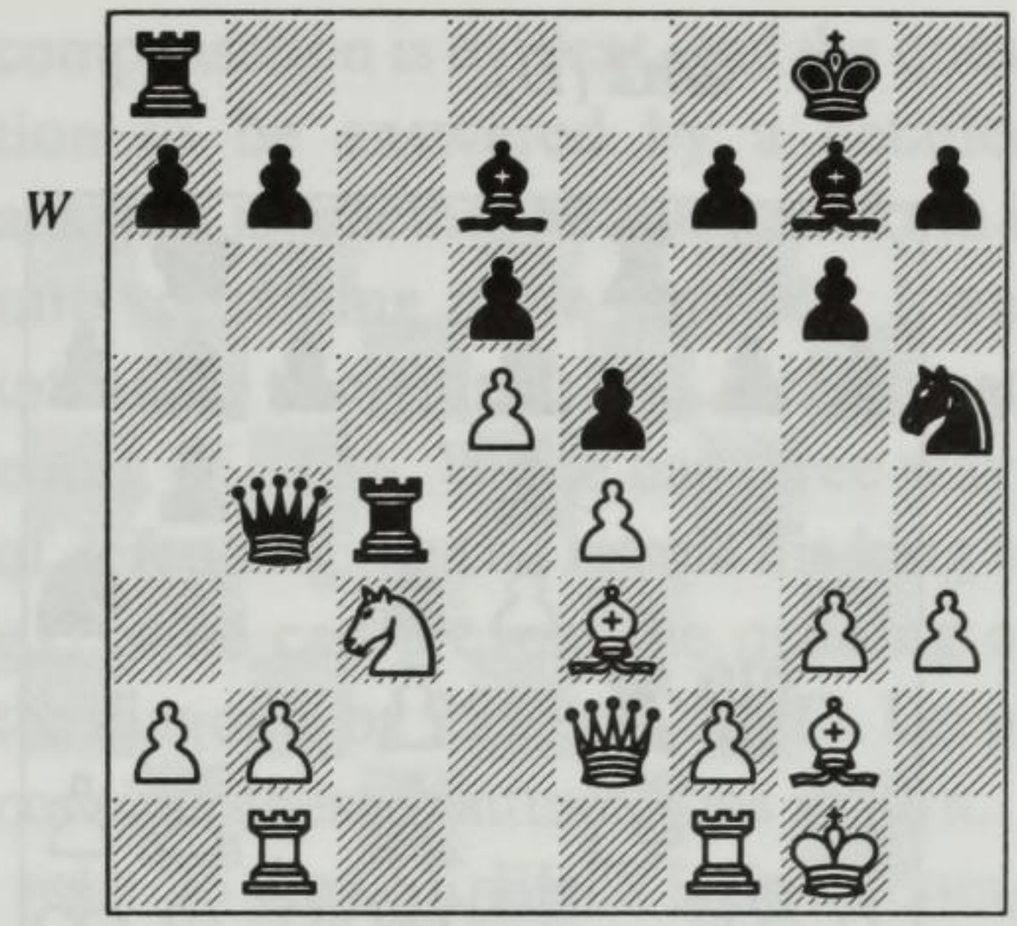
Naturally, 16...♕d8 would not have been in the spirit of the position, since in this case the switching of the king's rook to c8 would have lost its point. White could have played 17 ♘b5, forcing a favourable exchange. For the moment Black adheres to the plan already mentioned – obvious play on the queenside and latent play on the kingside.

**17 ♕e2**

The threat of ...f7-f5 has become unpleasant, because the white f-pawn is tied to the defence of the g3-pawn, and in addition, after the opening of the diagonal for his bishop, Black's pieces on the queenside would be very appropriately placed. It becomes evident that 15 ♖b1 was inaccurate – White has lost an important tempo.

**17 ... ♖c4** *(D)*

The line 17...f5 18 exf5 ♗xf5 19 ♖bc1, conceding the e4-square, would have been positionally unjustified.



Black decides to advance ...f7-f5 when it is more effective, and now the knight sacrifice at f4 becomes more and more of a reality. It was with the aim of preparing the sacrifice that Black chose his following move, which seems completely natural – the doubling of rooks on the c-file followed by play on the queenside.

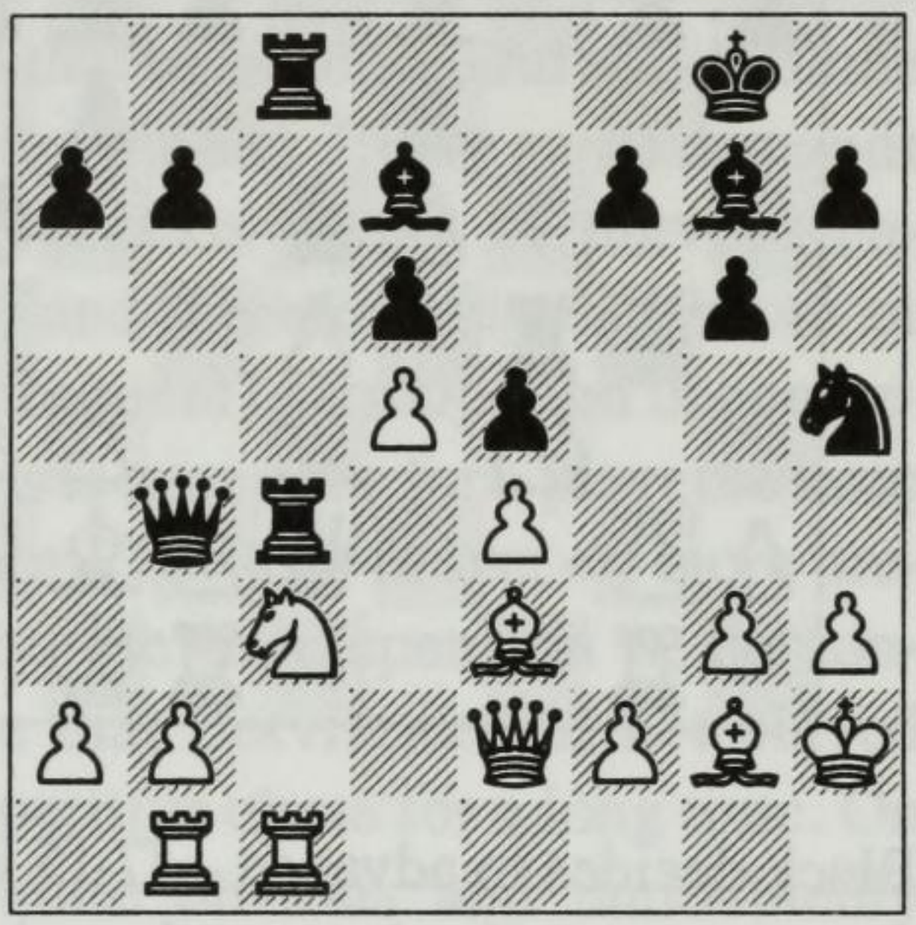
**18 ♖fc1**

Completely trusting the opponent. White wants to begin 'smoking out' the black pieces by ♗f1 and then to find a convenient moment to carry out mass exchanges. An ending will be very favourable for him, in view of the fact that Black's knight at h5 and bishop at g7 are stuck on the kingside and cannot easily be switched to the defence.

**18 ... ♖ac8**

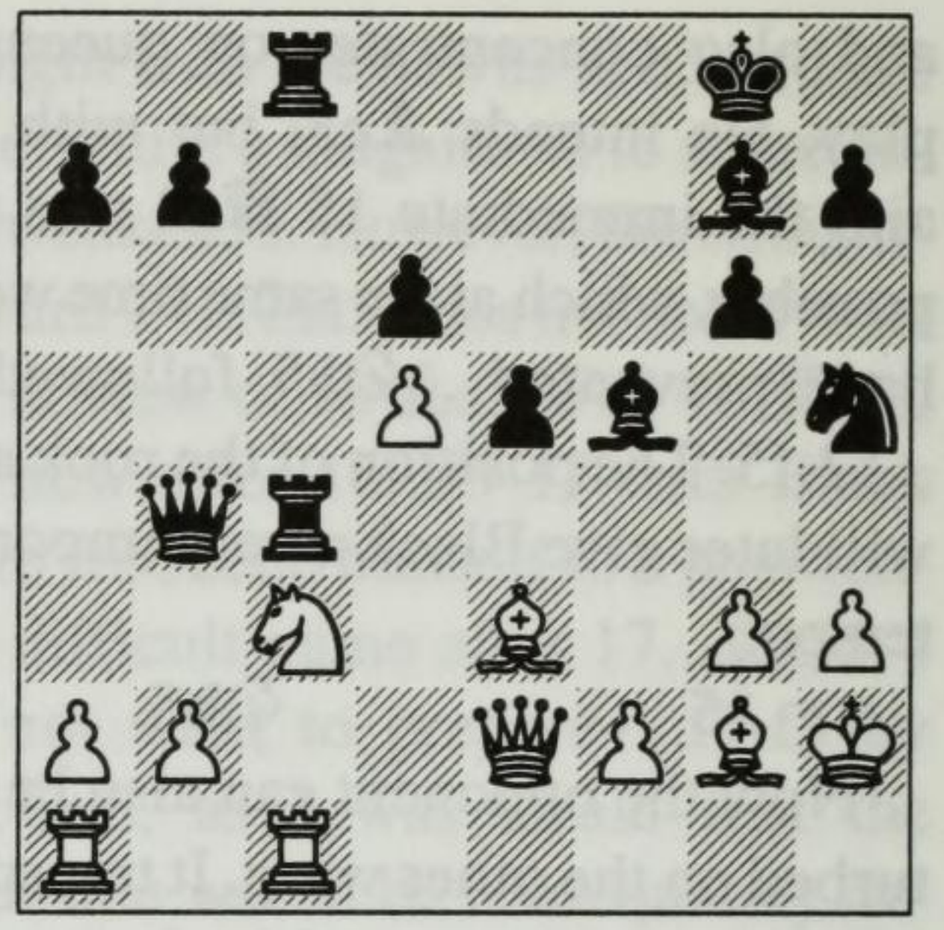
Sixteen minutes were spent considering this obvious move – Black was weighing up whether or not the idea, carried out a little later, would work now. No, it does not work. The variation has to be strengthened.

**19 ♔h2** *(D)*



A move which would have been very useful (he moves his king off the back rank, defending in case of necessity the g3-pawn), were it not for the real danger suddenly impending over White's position. Botvinnik evidently assumed that there were absolutely no threats and decided to make a useful prophylactic move, intending to follow up with either ♗f3 or ♗f1. It is true that even after the immediate 19 ♗f3 (♗f1) there would have followed 19...f5. After this waiting move Black reckons that everything is ready for the combination, and he makes the introductory 'anti-positional' move.

**19 ... f5!**
**20 exf5 ♗xf5**
**21 ♖a1** *(D)*



In the event of 21 a3 ♕b3 22 ♘e4 ♖c2 23 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 24 ♕d1 Black could have tried the interesting piece sacrifice 24...♘f4!? with unfathomable complications. Botvinnik most probably assumed that, in view of the threat of 22 g4, the black pieces were now forced to retreat and that White would be able to occupy the e4-square in comfort, but here the prepared surprise awaited him.

**21 ... ♘f4**

The controversy provoked by this move was, in my opinion, rather pointless. It is good, in that all other continuations are bad, and if the knight sacrifice is incorrect, then a question mark should be attached not to Black's 21st move, but, say, to his 17th. All the same, after the knight sacrifice Black's pieces (this applies especially to the recently 'unemployed' bishop at g7) become very active over the entire board and White is obliged to switch to the concrete analysis of numerous sharp variations. The acceptance of the sacrifice is forced.

**22 gxf4 exf4**
**23 ♗d2**

'23 a3 would have won the game'. This was the essence of an article by Goldberg with an analysis of this position, published in a bulletin after the

match. Botvinnik's second goes on to give numerous interesting variations confirming this viewpoint. The critical position arises after 23...♕b3 24 ♗xa7 (the immediate 23 ♗xa7 is refuted by 23...♕a5, when Black regains the piece, retaining all the advantages of his position). It is hardly worth trying to convince the reader that Black had evaluated in detail all the variations and had decided that the knight sacrifice at f4 would win. Rather, 21...♘f4 was a purely positional sacrifice. Let us in fact look at the position that arises in the variation recommended by Goldberg after 24 ♗xa7 *(D)*.

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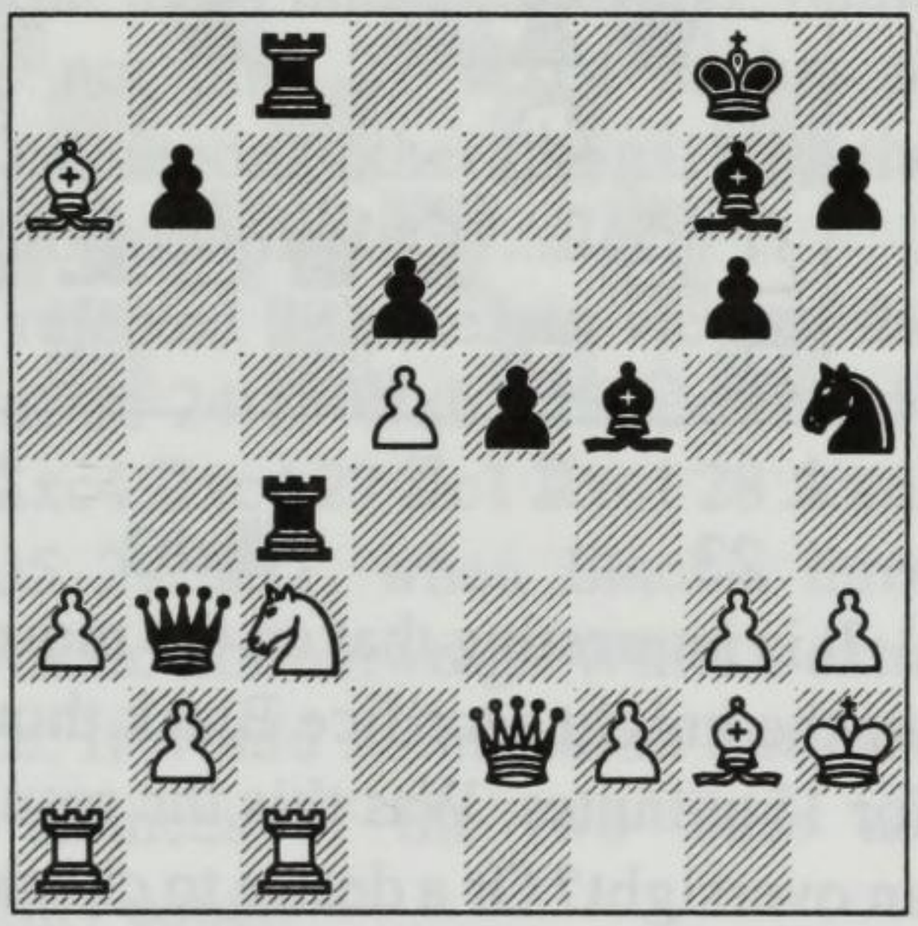


For the moment White's extra piece does not play a part, especially as Black can shut it out of the game by ...b7-b6, whereas both black bishops are extremely active, and can operate both on the queenside and on the kingside. White's queenside is also rather rigid, and his king's protection is weakened. Thus Black's positional compensation is evident, and the question to be answered by a detailed analysis is whether he can transform it into something more tangible. I was intending to continue 24...♗e5, threatening 25...f3+. White has three ways of defending: he can retreat his king to g1, or he can prevent the opening of the diagonal by 25 f3 or 25 ♗f3. Let us consider these continuations in turn.

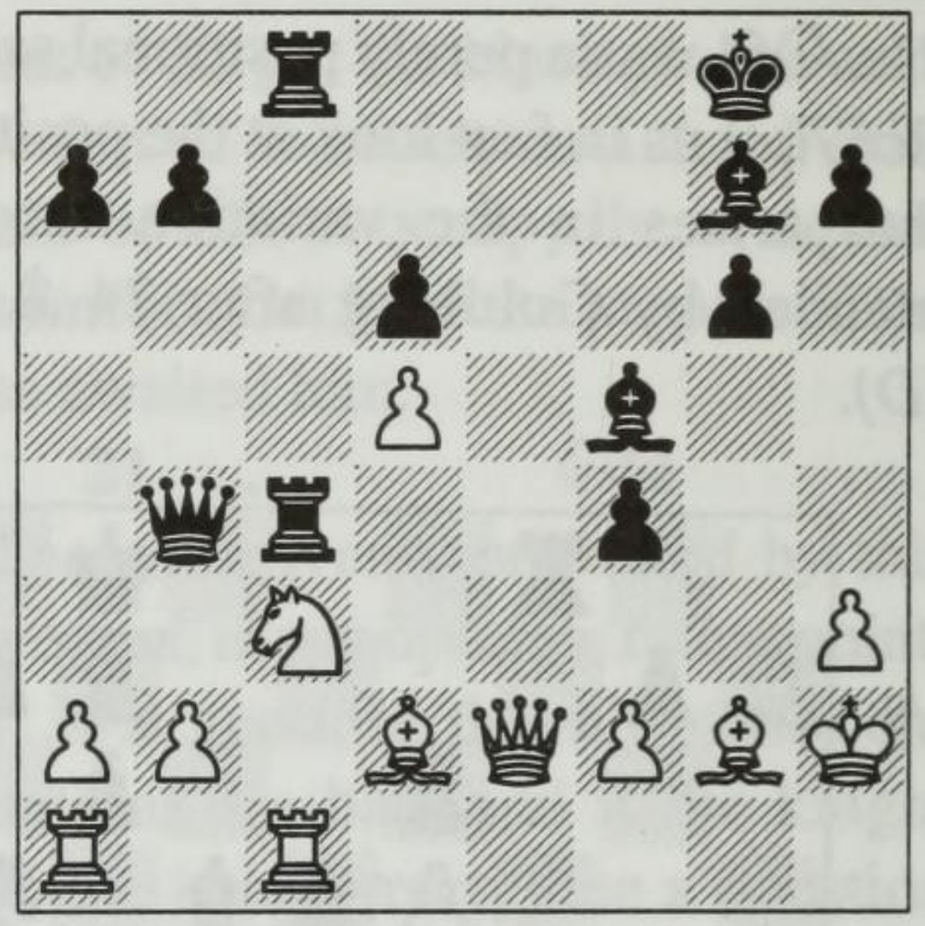
1) 25 ♔g1 b6. Black is threatening to regain the bishop by 26...♖4c7, and 26 ♕d1 ♕xb2 27 ♖a2 ♖xc3! does not help. It follows that White cannot release his bishop, and if so, then the position is materially equal but in practice favourable for Black.

Things are much more difficult for Black if White does not retreat his king to the back rank.

2) 25 f3. On the one hand, with this move White intends to return the 'runaway' from a7, but on the other hand he completely blocks in the other bishop at g2. Black replies with the routine 25...b6, when 26 ♕f2 is ineffective, as Black continues 26...♗d4 and then ...♗e3 with gain of tempo. That leaves 26 ♕d1, when Black exploits the weakening of the second rank by sacrificing his queen: 26...♕xb2 27 ♖a2 ♖xc3 28 ♖xb2 ♖xc1 29 ♕d2 ♗xb2 30 ♕xb2 ♖1c2 31 ♕d4 ♖e8. The black rook invades the second rank, and White has nothing better than to force a draw, either by going for perpetual check, or by continuing 32 ♕xf4 ♖ee2 33 ♕g3. These variations do not cause any arguments.

3) The most interesting play results from 25 ♗f3. The analysis of this continuation was the reason given by Goldberg for claiming Black's combination to be completely incorrect. The fact that the position is by no means as simple as Goldberg writes, is convincingly demonstrated by Konstantinopolsky in his analysis on the pages of the *Moscow Chess Bulletin*. During the game I was also intending to sacrifice my queen in this variation, but I avoided calculating further, reckoning that Black gains real compensation. Konstantinopolsky found a very interesting tactical confirmation of this. After the moves 25 ♗f3 b6 26 ♕d1 ♕xb2 27 ♖a2 ♖xc3 (It is noteworthy that Black's continuations are invariably the same. This, in my opinion, provides indirect evidence of the correctness of the combination. Black has a very easy game, whereas White has to seek defensive resources) 28 ♖xb2 ♖xc1 it transpires that 29 ♕d2 leads to a difficult position after the unexpected reply 29...♗e4!, when the pair of bishops, which until very recently were 'occupied' with the queenside, suddenly switch to a direct attack on the king. For example: 30 ♔g2 ♗xf3+ 31 ♔xf3 ♖8c3+ 32 ♔e4 ♖c4+ 33 ♔f3 ♖1c3+ 34 ♔e2 f3+ 35 ♔d1 ♗f4. White must therefore play 29 ♕e2, but here too after 29...♖8c3 (also indicated by Konstantinopolsky) for the moment the material deficit is not felt. It is possible that ways of improving White's defence will subsequently be found, but the present commentary by no means claims to be a detailed analysis of all the variations that could have occurred. Its role is to reveal the course of the struggle through the eyes of one of the participants, and from this point of view I am convinced that the double-edged knight sacrifice at f4 was the correct decision.

Now we return to the position after 23 ♗d2 *(D)*.




**23 ... ♕xb2**

It is interesting that on the move after the knight sacrifice Black thought for 15 minutes. Was this the result of an oversight? Or a desire to check the variations? Neither one, nor the other. It was merely a confirmation, so to speak, of the intuitive nature of the sacrifice, a confirmation that Black had not calculated variations beginning with the sacrifice and ending in mate. Also no less indicative was the fact that later analysis showed this move to be incorrect. While I was thinking, I had already written down

on my scoresheet 23...♗e5, a move which, as it transpires, was the strongest. After it White cannot play 24 ♔g1 ♕xb2, when 25 ♘d1 ♖xc1 is not possible, while after 25 ♖ab1 ♗xb1 26 ♖xb1 ♕c2 27 ♖c1 (or 27 ♗e4 ♖xe4) 27...♕f5 28 ♕f3 ♕h5 29 ♘e2 ♖c2 the weakness of the queenside is again in evidence.

24 ♗f3 is also unsuccessful. However, after 24...♕xb2 25 ♘d1 Black is not obliged to sacrifice his queen, as Konstantinopolsky gives in his analysis, but can advantageously continue 25...♕a3! After 26 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 27 ♕xc4 ♕xf3 Black's attack is irresistible – apart from anything else the rook at a1 is attacked, and if White does not play 27 ♕xc4 he has to reckon, among other things, with the positional threat of 27...♖c2.

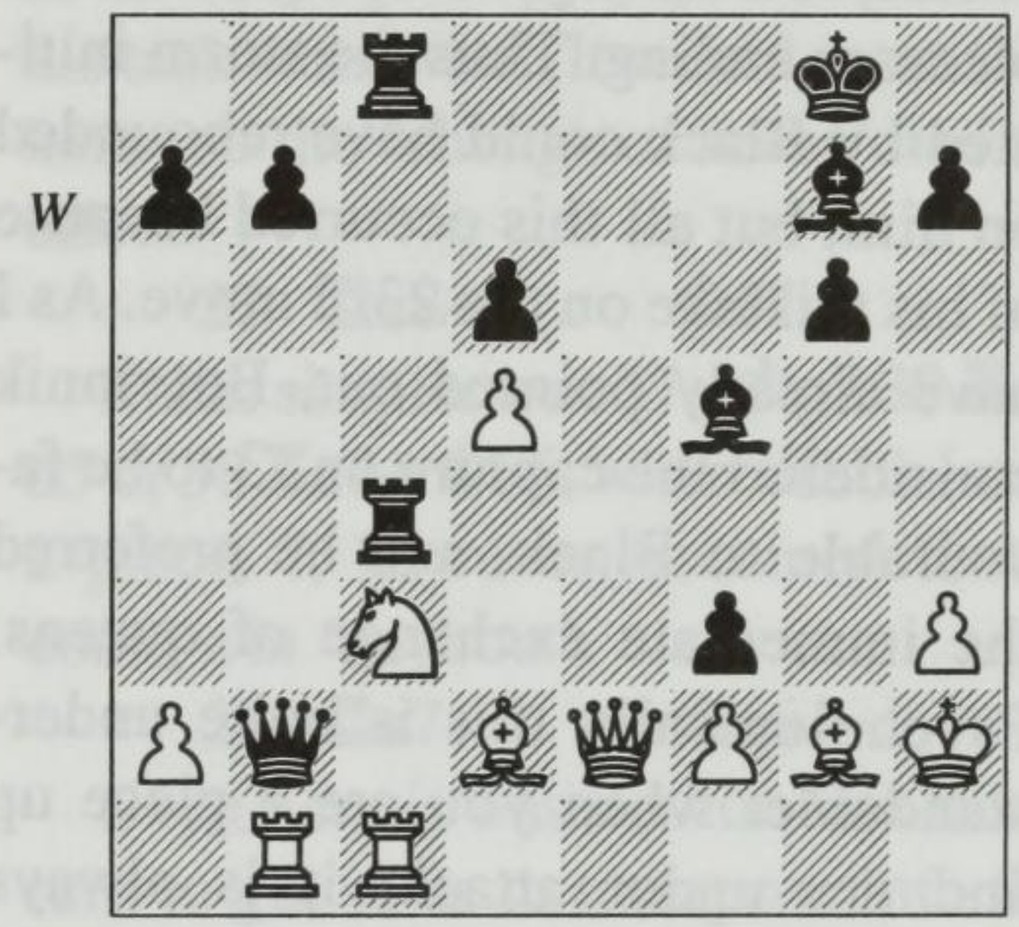
I rejected 23...♗e5 in view of the variation 24 f3 ♕xb2 25 ♘d1! ♕d4 26 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 27 ♖c1 ♖xc1 28 ♗xc1 ♕xd5 29 ♗f1, when Black's three pawns do not outweigh White's extra piece. It would seem that in this case the chances of the two sides are roughly equal.

But how could Black gain an advantage, if White played the initial part of the game slightly passively, but very solidly? Probably the creation of a position, in which White has to make do with a draw, is in itself a considerable achievement for Black. When I played the text-move, I reckoned that the game should end in a draw by repetition. Perhaps all those observing the game were of the same opinion, and it was only a few days later that grandmaster Salo Flohr found a beautiful winning possibility for White.

**24 ♖ab1**

24 ♘d1 would have lost to 24...♕e5!, when there is no defence against the numerous threats, for example: 25 ♕xe5 ♗xe5 26 ♖xc4 (or 26 ♗f3 ♖c2) 26...♖xc4 27 ♖c1 f3+. White gives up the exchange, with the aim of seizing the initiative.

**24 ... f3** *(D)*



It was on this move that Black was pinning all his hopes. I saw that White could not play 25 ♖xb2, and considered the natural conclusion of events to be 25 ♗xf3 ♗xb1 26 ♖xb1 ♕c2 27 ♖c1 ♕b2 28 ♖b1 etc. During the game Botvinnik too thought that his position was by no means better. After the game he showed the variation that he did not like – 27...♕f5, but in his calculations he overlooked the possibility of 28 ♗g4 ♕e5+ 29 ♕xe5 ♗xe5+ 30 f4 ♖xc3 31 ♗xc8 (it was

this move that escaped my opponent's attention).

A few days later grandmaster Flohr found that White was not obliged to go in for the repetition of moves, since he has the unexpected 27 ♗e4!! ♖xe4 28 ♘xe4!! (not 28 ♕xe4 ♗e5+, which both players had considered). Now after both 28...♕xb1 29 ♘xd6 ♖f8 30 ♕e6+ ♔h8 31 ♘f7+ ♖xf7 32 ♕xf7 ♕f5 33 ♕xf5 gxf5 34 ♔g3 ♗e5+ 35 ♗f4, and 28...♗e5+ 29 ♔g2 ♕xb1 30 ♘xd6! ♗xd6 31 ♕e6+ ♔g7 32 ♕d7+! White obtains significantly the more pleasant ending. Thus the storm initiated by Black could have rebounded on him, but all this occurred because of his mistake on the 23rd move. As I have already pointed out, Botvinnik considered the capture on f3 to be favourable to Black, and he preferred the immediate exchange of queens. Psychologically this is quite understandable: when you are a piece up and are under attack, it is always pleasant to get rid of the opponent's queen, but in his calculations White underestimated the strength of Black's 26th move.

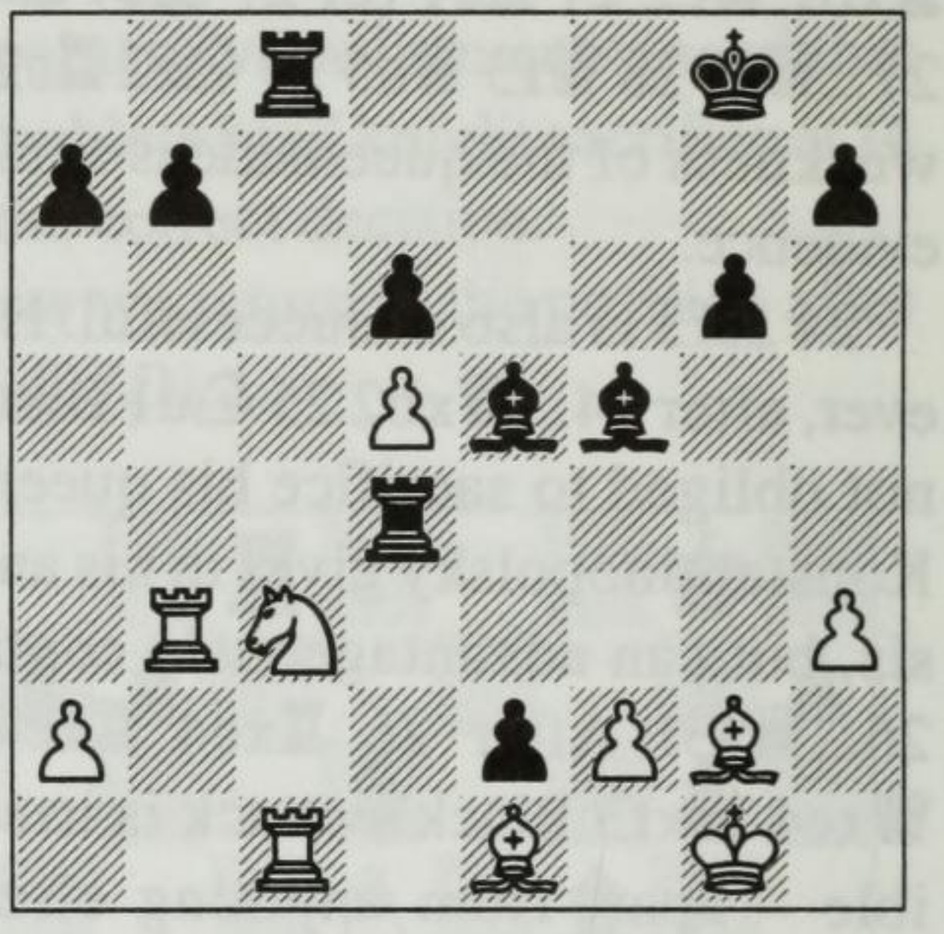
**25 ♖xb2? fxe2**
**26 ♖b3 ♖d4**

The unwieldy black rook has suddenly acquired colossal strength in the centre of the board. Since White has 'plugged' the c-file, the rook switches to the d-file, and in collaboration with the passed e2-pawn brings Black victory.

**27 ♗e1**

There is nothing better. If 27 ♗e3 Black wins by 27...♖xc3 28 ♖bxc3 ♖d1.

**27 ... ♗e5+**
**28 ♔g1** *(D)*



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**28 ... ♗f4**

Unfortunately, Black misses an opportunity to conclude the game quickly and prettily with 28...♖xc3! 29 ♖bxc3 ♖d1 30 ♖c4 ♗b2. In this, it is true, a part was played by reasons not at all connected with chess: the noise in the auditorium prompted the match arbiters to carry out their threat and transfer the play to a closed room. This, of course, proved to be a very severe warning to the spectators, since during the subsequent games they did not give cause for such a measure, but the feeling, when the clocks are stopped and you are politely asked to leave the stage, moreover at the very height of the game, can also hardly be called pleasant. At any rate, I am somehow not yet used to playing in such 'nomadic' conditions. Such an unaccustomed

transference could have led to an even worse blunder, and therefore I deliberately chose a less strong, but safer continuation, where there was no longer any need to calculate lengthy variations.

**29 ♘xe2**

After 29 ♖a1, whatever the circumstances, Black could have finally decided on 29...♖xc3 30 ♖xc3 ♖d1.

**29 ... ♖xc1**

**30 ♘xd4**

Or 30 ♘xc1 ♖d1. Botvinnik's last chance is somehow to exploit the activity of his knight.

**30 ... ♖xe1+**

**31 ♗f1 ♗e4**

Two active bishops and an extra pawn is an advantage more than sufficient for a win. Now White cannot play 32 ♖xb7 because of 32...♗d3.

**32 ♘e2 ♗e5**

**33 f4 ♗f6**

**34 ♖xb7**

If 34 ♔f2 Black can reply 34...♗h4+ or, even simpler, 34...♖b1.

**34 ... ♗xd5**

**35 ♖c7**

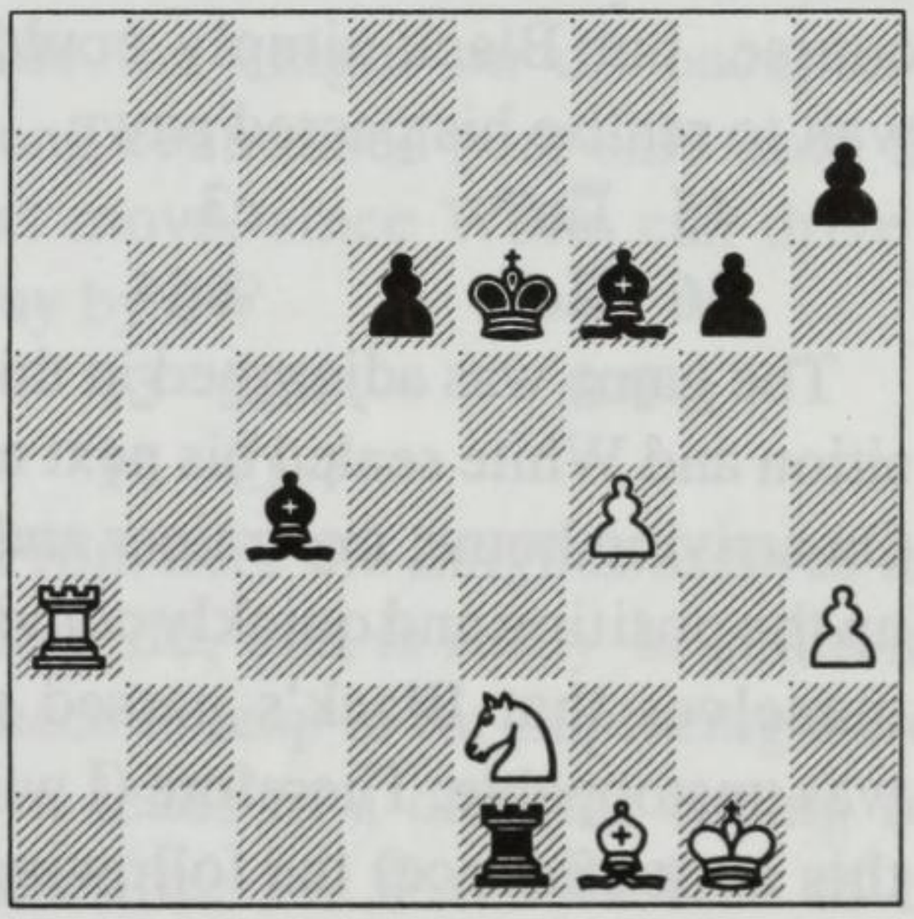
Not 35 ♖xa7 ♖xe2.

**35 ... ♗xa2**

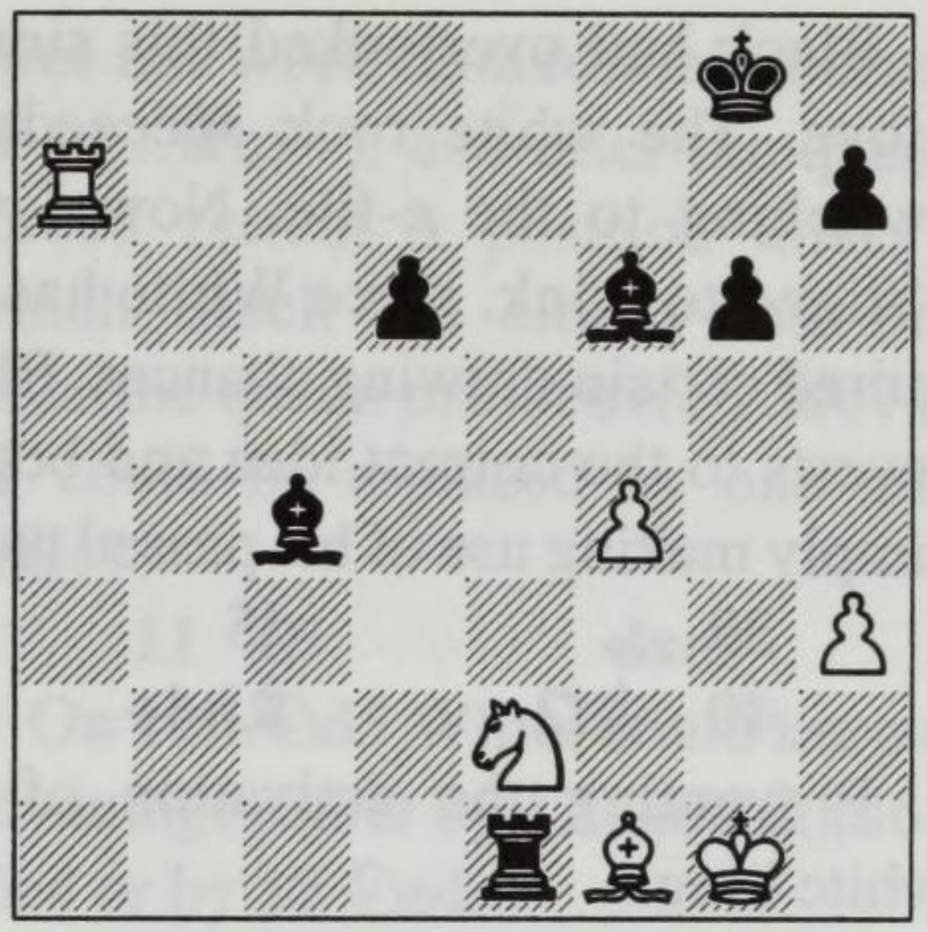
**36 ♖xa7**

Now White has this possibility, since if 36...♖xe2 he can interpose 37 ♖a8+.

**36 ... ♗c4** *(D)*



The white pieces are completely tied up, and the advance of the d-pawn will quickly decide the game. However, from the 26th move onwards



Black had been replying instantly, and in the subsequent play he complicates his task somewhat. It would seem that here too the 'change of scene' had an effect.

**37 ♖a8+ ♔f7**

Much simpler was 37...♔g7 38 ♖e8 d5 or 38 ♖a7+ ♔h6, when White loses a piece. I, however, assumed that I could win 'anyhow'.

**38 ♖a7+ ♔e6**

Even here it was not too late to return to g8, so as to transpose into the variation given in the previous note.

**39 ♖a3** *(D)*

Black had overlooked this simple move. The white rook succeeds in switching to the e-file. Now I was obliged to think, since White has acquired certain drawing chances. Black reverts to the correct idea and begins simply making use of his passed pawn.

**39 ... d5**
**40 ♔f2 ♗h4+**

Preventing the activation of the white king.

**41 ♔g2 ♔d6**

The 40 moves had been made, but the players remained in their seats. Botvinnik obviously reckoned that, if Black were to continue playing so rapidly, he would make a mistake somewhere, while I kept playing through 'inertia'.

**42 ♘g3**

White finally escapes from the pin, but at a high price – the resulting rook ending is completely hopeless for him.

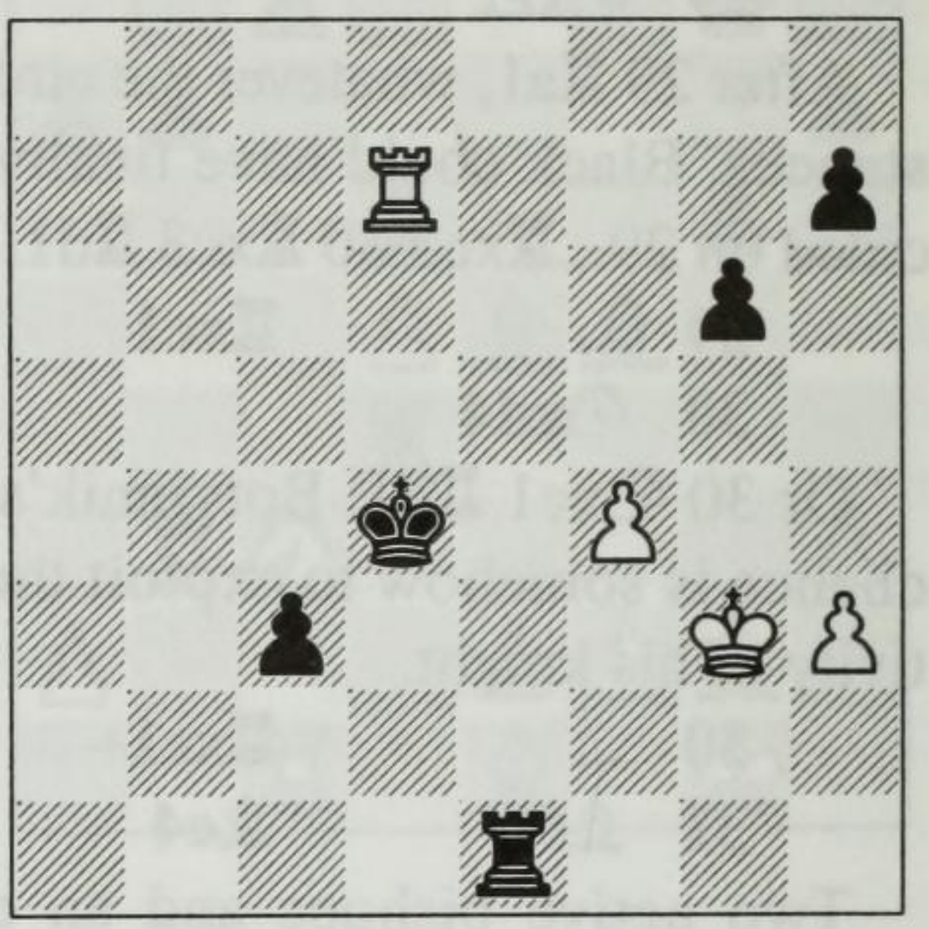
**42 ... ♗xg3**
**43 ♗xc4 dxc4**
**44 ♔xg3 ♔d5**

44...♖e7 was also possible, of course, but Black simply could not wait to realise his passed pawn.

**45 ♖a7 c3**
**46 ♖c7 ♔d4**

The game was adjourned in this position and White sealed his next move. On arriving home, my trainer and I set up the position and quickly convinced ourselves that Black's passed pawn was unstoppable. Therefore (I will say this in confidence) the following day we did not even take breakfast, but waited in our room for a call from the arbiter informing us of White's resignation. At midday the long-awaited call was received. White's sealed move was **47 ♖d7+** *(D)*.

*B*



**0-1**

Game 35

**Tal – Darga**

*USSR-West Germany Match, Hamburg 1960*

Sicilian Defence

**1 e4 c5**
**2 ♘f3 e6**
**3 d4 cxd4**
**4 ♘xd4 ♘f6**
**5 ♘c3 d6**

I think that the choice of this line was made mainly on psychological grounds. At the Candidates Tournament in Yugoslavia, Darga was Olafsson's second, and no doubt observed that in the Tal-Smyslov game from the 22nd round White played uncertainly

when faced with the Scheveningen Variation.

Taking into account the fact that the Scheveningen Variation is not an altogether frequent guest in the games of my opponent, I decided to play a quiet, relatively rarely-played continuation, thus ruling out any type of prepared variation.

**6 g3 a6**
**7 ♗g2 ♕c7**

I think that it would be more sensible first to complete the development of the kingside pieces by 7...♗e7 and 8...0-0, and only then determine the positions of the remaining pieces.

**8 0-0 ♗e7**
**9 f4**

This looks dubious as White weakens himself along the g1-a7 diagonal. Black's next move is an attempt to exploit this circumstance, but instead it is a virtually decisive positional mistake after which he is forced into a difficult position. Black should have simply castled, whereupon the normal position in such variations would have been reached, where White advances his kingside pawns and Black aims for counterplay on the queenside by ...b5 (or in some cases by ...d5).

**9 ... ♘c6?**

This move would be very good if it were not a mistake! Now White gains a significant positional advantage by force.

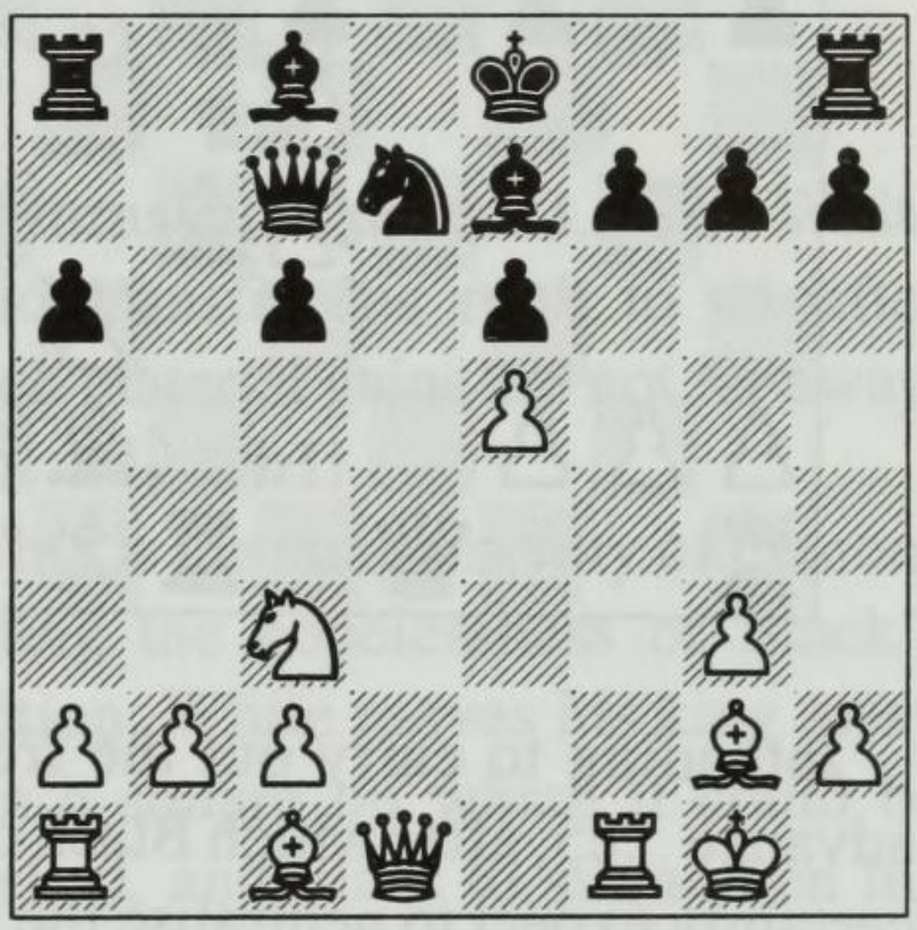
**10 ♘xc6! bxc6**

On 10...♕xc6 White has the useful move 11 ♔h1 threatening 12 e5 (which does not work immediately because of 11...♕c5+), and after the queen's forced retreat a position arises in which Black has clearly lost time, since the queen manoeuvre ...♕c7-c6-c7 could be replaced by one move ...♕c7.

**11 e5 dxe5**

On 11...♘d5 White could keep the advantage either by 12 exd6 ♗xd6 13 ♘e4 or by 12 ♘e4.

**12 fxe5 ♘d7** *(D)*



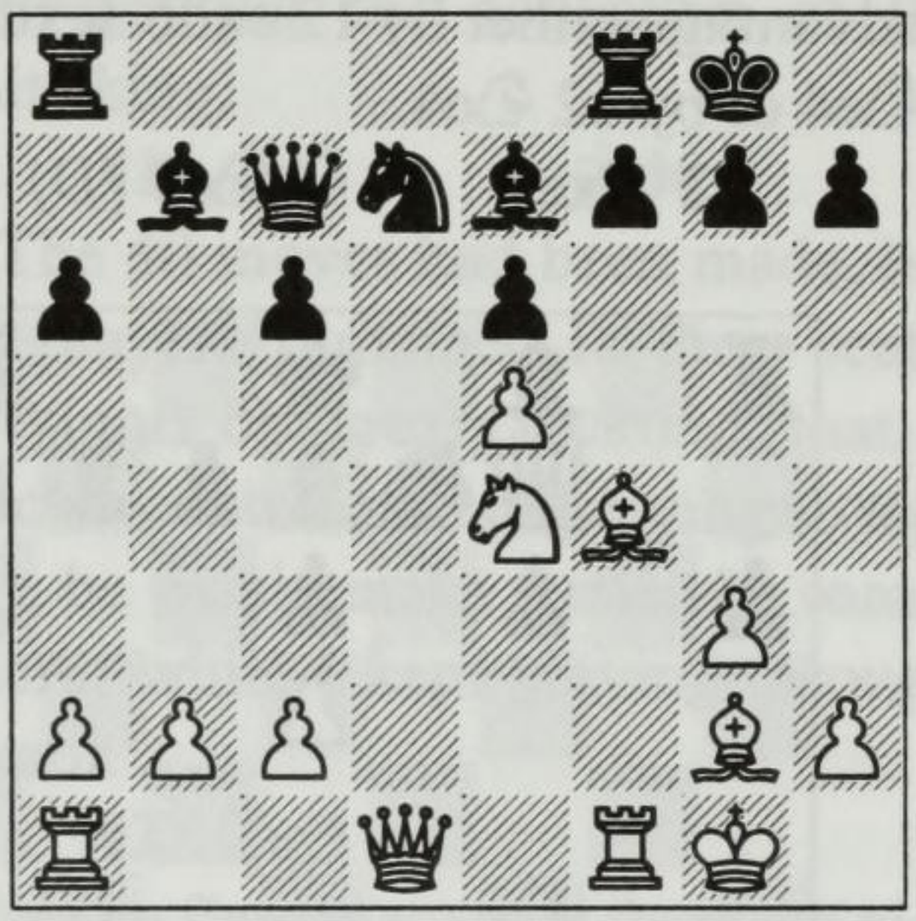
After 12...♘d5 13 ♘e4 Black cannot play 13...♕xe5 14 c4 ♘f6 because of 15 ♗f4 followed by 16 ♘d6+, while the knight on d5 occupies a strong centralised post only until the next move, since White can drive it away by c4.

**13 ♗f4 0-0**
**14 ♘e4**

From here the knight observes the square d6, and is ready in some instances to leap to f6. Capturing the e-pawn leads to a difficult ending for Black after 14...♘xe5 15 ♕d4 f6 16

♗xe5 ♕xe5 17 ♕xe5 fxe5 18 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 19 ♖f1+, when Black's extra pawn is only a nuisance since both his bishops are restricted in their movements. Perhaps Black could have drawn this ending, but to have to play such a position is most unpleasant.

**14 ... ♗b7** *(D)*



Intending to carry out the freeing advance ...c5, after which Black could certainly expect to neutralise the pressure. White gets nowhere by 15 ♘d6 ♗xd6 16 exd6 ♕b6+ 17 ♔h1 c5, and the advanced pawn on d6 is not a real threat to Black while the bishop on f4 is badly placed. After lengthy consideration, White finds a plan of attack on the kingside, which involves forcing a weakening of the dark squares.

**15 ♕h5! g6**

Now 15...c5 would be bad because of 16 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 17 exf6 ♘xf6 18 ♗xc7 ♘xh5 19 ♗xb7 ♖a7 and White has a choice between retreating one bishop to f3 or the other to d6, in either case keeping his material advantage. Perhaps the least evil was 15...♕b6+ 16 ♔h1 c5, after which 17 ♘f6+ does not work. Against this White was intending either 17 ♖ad1, with pressure along the d-file, or else 17 ♗g5, hoping to exploit the remoteness of the black queen for the creation of real threats on the kingside.

In making the move in the game Black was evidently counting on 16 ♕h6 ♘xe5!, and White is unable to exploit the pin while nothing decisive is promised by his attack on the king, e.g. 17 ♘g5 ♗xg5 18 ♗xg5 (or 18 ♕xg5 f6 19 ♗xe5? ♕b6+) 18...f5!

**16 ♕e2!**

White has achieved his goal: the f6-square is weak. In passing, a new resource for the attack has appeared – the possibility of beginning operations on the f-file by ♗h6.

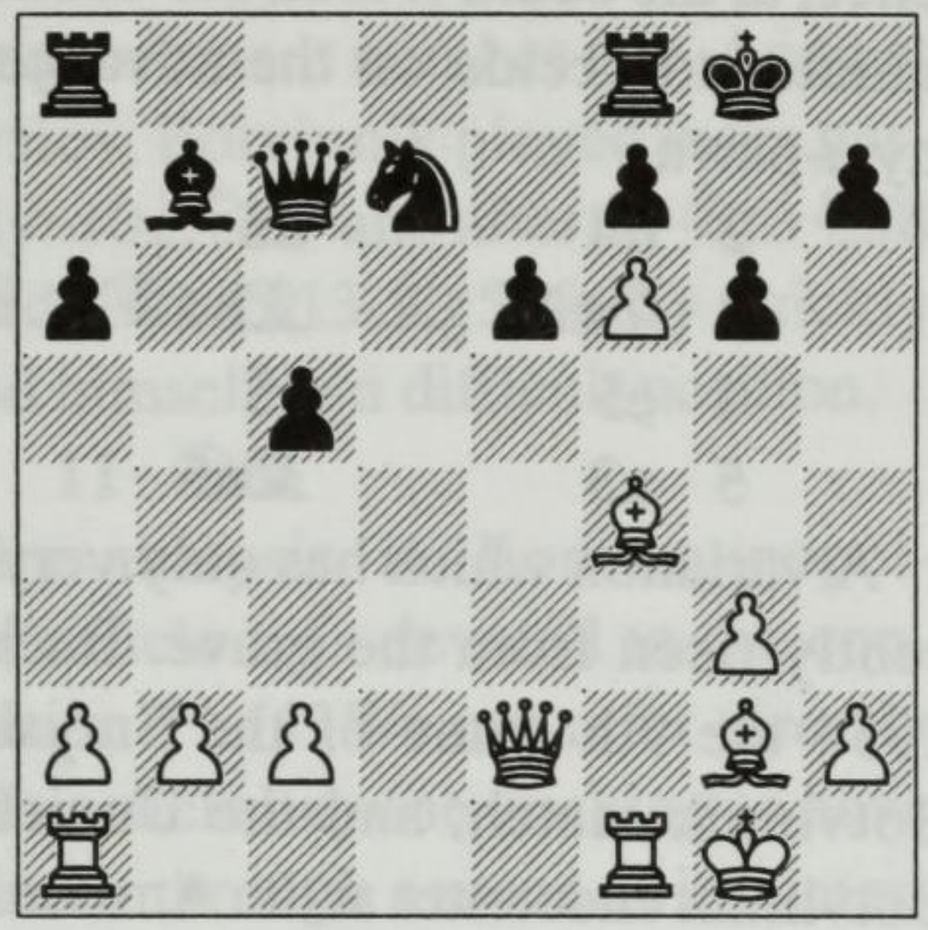
**16 ... c5**

For the last time in this game the pawn on e5 was attacked, but if Black had used his 'right' and had eliminated this outpost I had two continuations, each of which appeared most tempting – 17 ♖ae1 ♕b6+ (of course, 17...f6 18 ♘xf6+ leads to a lost ending) 18 ♔h1 ♘d7 19 ♗h6, with a dangerous initiative for the pawn, for example: 19...♖fe8 20 ♕f3 f5 21 ♕c3 ♗f8 22 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 23 ♘d6. The alternative was 17 ♘f2, forcing ...f6 and transposing into variations similar to those considered earlier.

**17 ♘f6+ ♗xf6**

Bad is 17...♔h8 18 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 19 ♗h6 winning the f-pawn.

**18 exf6** *(D)*



*B*

A metamorphosis has occurred. The weak white pawn on e5 has been transformed into a highly unpleasant wedge on f6, after which mating threats arise of their own accord. Thus on 18...♕b6 White could play 19 ♗xb7 ♕xb7, and then place his bishop on d6 and his queen on h6 via e3. In this case his attack would be irresistible.

**18 ... e5**

**19 ♗xe5!**

Much stronger than 19 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 20 ♗xe5 ♖ae8 21 ♕e3 ♖xe5 22 ♕h6 ♘xf6. White no longer needs his dark-squared bishop.

**19 ... ♘xe5**

Black's position is also hopeless after 19...♕xe5 20 ♕xe5 ♘xe5 21 ♗xb7 ♖ab8 22 ♗d5 ♖xb2 23 ♖ae1.

**20 ♗xb7 ♖ab8**

Also bad is 20...♕xb7 21 ♕xe5 ♖fe8 22 ♕g5.

**21 ♗d5 ♖b6**

Against 21...♖xb2 White had prepared a combination: 22 ♖ae1 ♘d7 23 ♗xf7+! ♖xf7 24 ♕e8+ ♖f8 (or 24...♘f8 25 ♖e7) 25 ♖e7! ♕c6 (there is nothing better) 26 ♖g7+ ♔h8 27 ♕e7! Insufficient here is 27 ♖xh7+ ♔xh7 28 ♕e7+ ♔h6 29 ♕g7+ ♔g5 30 h4+ ♔g4 31 ♕xg6+ ♔h3 32 ♕f5+ ♔xg3 and during the game I could not find a mating continuation.

Black plans to attack the f6-pawn by transferring his knight to d7, and, if necessary, his queen to d6. Since this plan cannot in fact be realised, I decided not to hinder my opponent.

**22 ♖ae1 ♘d7**

**23 ♕e7 c4**

It turns out that on 23...♕d6 White could transfer his rook to d1 after which material gains are not far away.

**24 ♔h1!**

This is the simplest way of demonstrating the hopelessness of Black's position. White moves his king away from a square on which it could be checked, and plans to strengthen his position decisively. Black's attempt to obtain counterplay merely hastens the end.

**24 ... ♖xb2**

**25 ♖e6!**

With this tactical stroke White exploits the fatal pin on the black knight – the rook is to be transferred to the d-file.

**25 ... ♖bb8**

**26 ♖d6**

Avoiding the last trap in this game: 26 ♖c6? ♕a5! 27 ♕xd7 ♖bd8.

**26 ... ♖bd8**

**27 ♖d1 1-0**

Despite material equality, Black's decision to resign is well-timed. In the first place he has nothing to move, his activity being restricted to manoeuvring his king between g8 and h8 and his queen inside the small triangle c7-a7-c8, while in addition there is no defence against ♗f3 winning a piece.

Game 36

**Fischer – Tal**

*Leipzig Olympiad 1960*

French Defence

**1 e4 e6!**

What is this, immodesty? Even the most subjective of chess players has never given an exclamation mark to this move, which has been known for a long time. But should this move deserve approval (for reasons not appertaining to chess), then the immodesty of the annotator is not so great. He really only deserves half an exclamation mark, the other half being due to A. Koblents, since it was during the process of preparing for this game that the idea of playing the French Defence occurred to us, although I have adopted this opening very, very rarely, and without great success. Even so, the choice of such a variation must have been an unpleasant surprise for Fischer, since positions of this type have occurred in his games very rarely, and a study of his games showed that the American Champion feels much less confident in unfamiliar positions. To be honest I should admit that, after deciding prior to the game to play the French Defence, at the board it took me about 10 minutes to decide on the advance of my e-pawn.

**2 d4 d5**
**3 ♘c3 ♗b4**
**4 e5 c5**
**5 a3 ♗a5**

A variation which has only very recently risen from the grave. Back in 1954 the 9th game of the Smyslov-Botvinnik match, and the Unzicker-Botvinnik encounter at the Amsterdam Olympiad, created the firm opinion that the system with 5...♗a5 was unfavourable for Black. Five years passed, and in one of the 1960 chess bulletins a note by international master Konstantinopolsky appeared, in which new plans found for Black in this variation were described. I remember how, before the match with Botvinnik, Koblents and I spent some considerable time playing through these variations, though at the time we were unable to test them, since in the 1960 match Botvinnik did not adopt this system.

A short time later chess magazines all over the world, including our (Latvian) magazine, published the interesting game Matanović-Mititelu, played in the Budapest Zonal Tournament, in which Mititelu won as Black.

In my game with Fischer the following moves were made very quickly.

**6 b4 cxd4**
**7 ♕g4 ♘e7**
**8 bxa5 dxc3**

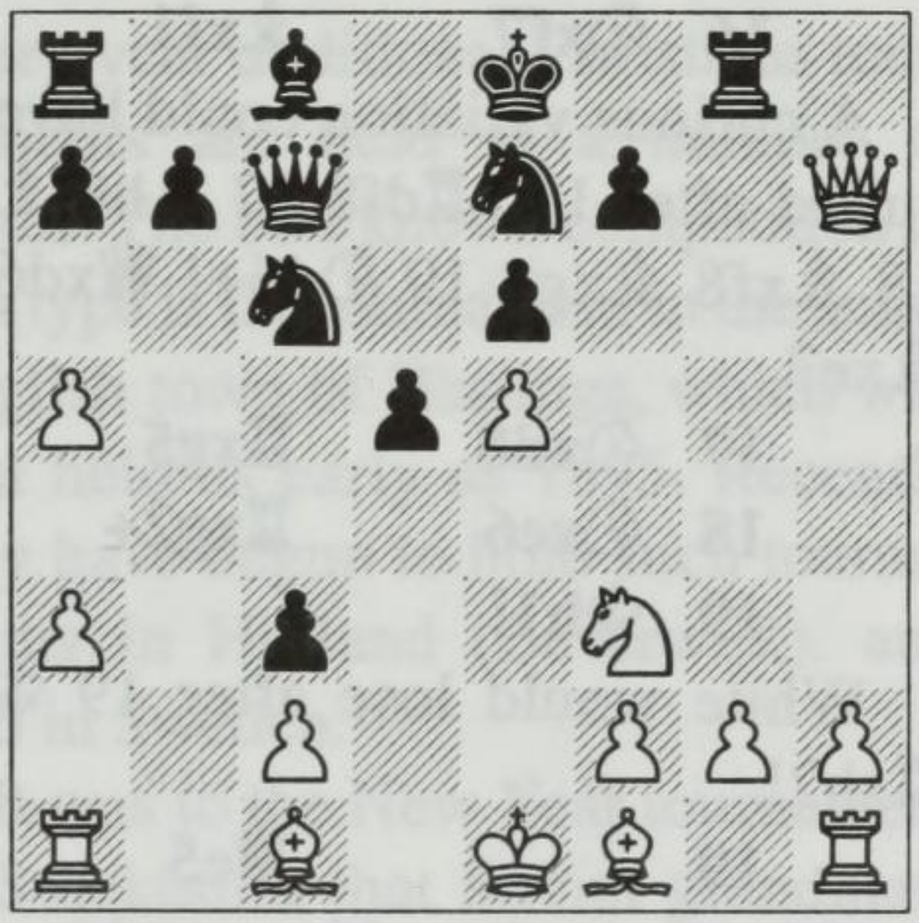
**9 ♕xg7 ♖g8**
**10 ♕xh7 ♘bc6!**

Improvement number one. Against Smyslov, Botvinnik played more passively: 10...♘d7 and after 11 ♘f3 ♘f8 12 ♕d3 ♕xa5 13 ♗g5! fairly quickly found himself in a difficult position.

**11 ♘f3**

The analysis in Konstantinopolsky's article was devoted to the continuation 11 f4. We can refer directly to this article anyone wishing to have a wander through a maze of innumerable complications, but in our game there was a completely different story.

**11 ... ♕c7** *(D)*



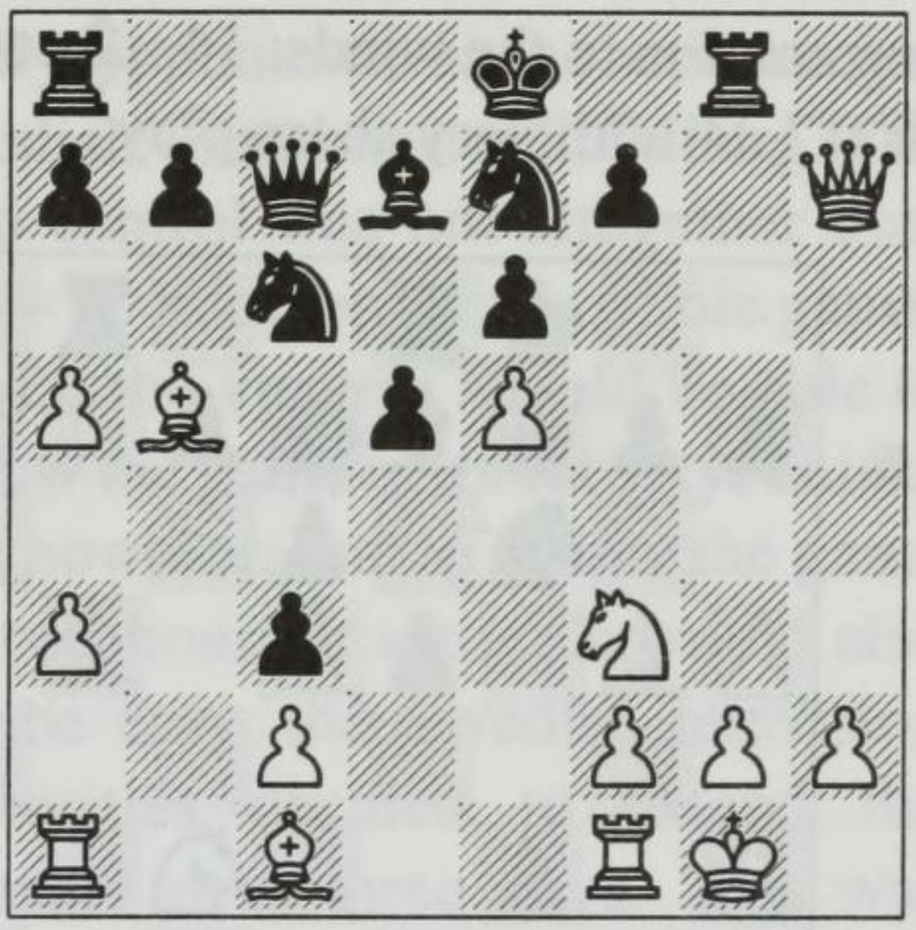
**12 ♗b5**

After this move White probably cannot count on obtaining an opening advantage. Black is set more difficult problems after 12 ♗f4 as occurred in the game Unzicker-Dückstein (Zurich 1959). In making the move in the game Fischer reckoned that it would be unfavourable for Black to play 12...♖xg2 13 ♔f1! ♖g8 14 ♖g1 with a strong attack. However, Black, having given up his king's flank, had no intention of taking the opportunity for reciprocity, and played simply ...

**12 ... ♗d7**

Now both White's g-pawn, which Black seriously threatens to capture, and his e-pawn are attacked. After lengthy reflection Fischer decided to give up his central pawn.

**13 0-0** *(D)*



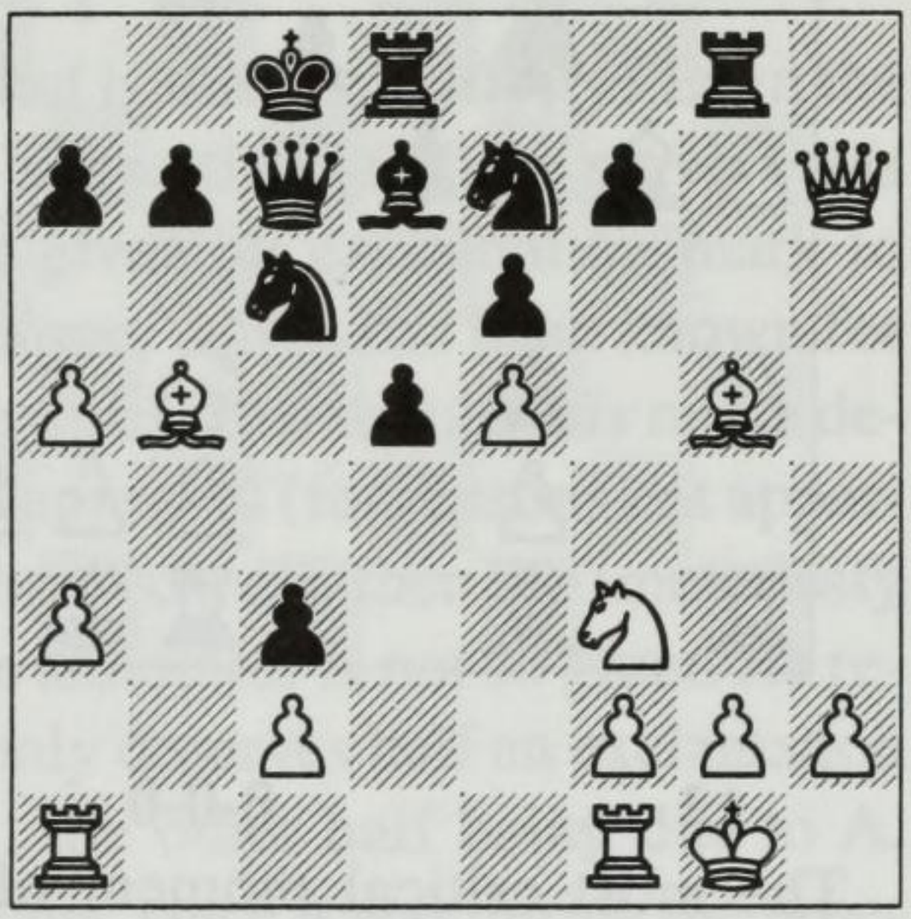
**13 ... 0-0-0**

The most critical moment of the game. At this point I spent about 40 minutes assessing the position arising after 13...♘xe5 14 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 15 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 16 ♕d3. At first sight it appears very attractive for Black. He has good chances both in the middlegame (in view of the open files on the kingside), and in the endgame, thanks to his far advanced pawn on c3. At the board I somehow could not find a way to strengthen my position significantly, while at the same time the b-file gives White considerable counter-chances.

For example: 16...♖ac8 17 ♖b1 ♔c7 18 ♖b5! ♔b8 19 ♗e3 and White has activated his forces. It is very difficult for Black to set his central pawn mass in motion, and therefore I rejected 13...♘xe5, preferring the stronger move in the game.

**14 ♗g5** *(D)*

Now head-spinning complications arise, eventually ending in perpetual check. White could also have continued 14 ♗xc6 when I intended throwing caution to the winds: 14...♗xc6 15 ♕xf7 d4 with very sharp play[1].



*B*

**14 ... ♘xe5!**

Were it not for this move, Black's position would be unenviable. Now White has to switch to the calculation of intricate variations.

**15 ♘xe5!**

Bad, of course, is 15 ♗xe7 ♘xf3+ 16 ♔h1 ♖h8 threatening 17...♖xh7 and 17...♕xh2+. In the case of 15 ♗xd7+ Black has a choice between 15...♔xd7 and 15...♖xd7 16 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 17 ♗xe7 ♖h8 18 ♖ae1 ♖xh7 19 ♖xe5 ♖xe7 with the better chances in the ending. Now it is Black's move, and with it comes his turn to solve complicated problems.

**15 ... ♗xb5!**

The attempt to play in analogous fashion to a variation given previously, 15...♕xe5 would lead, after 16 ♗xe7 ♖h8 (or 16...♗xb5 17 ♗xd8 ♖h8 18 ♖ae1 ♕xe1 19 ♖xe1 ♖xh7 20 ♗f6) 17 ♖fe1! (not 17 ♖ae1 ♕b8!) 17...♕xe1+ 18 ♖xe1 ♖xh7 19 ♗xd8 ♔xd8 20 ♗xd7 ♔xd7 21 ♖e3 d4 22 ♖e4 to a certain advantage for White.

**16 ♘xf7 ♗xf1**

A curious variation could have resulted after 16...♖df8 17 ♗h6 ♗xf1 18 ♗xf8 ♗xg2 19 ♘d6+! ♕xd6 20 ♗xe7.

**17 ♘xd8 ♖xg5**
**18 ♘xe6 ♖xg2+**
**19 ♔h1!**

White would lose after 19 ♔xf1 ♖xh2!.

**19 ... ♕e5**

When starting his combination with 14...♘xe5, Black thought that, besides the move in the game which guarantees him a draw, he also could play the sharper 19...♕c4 20 ♕xe7 ♖g8 but on actually reaching this position he realised that after 21 ♘f4! d4 22 ♕e4! the stranded black bishop has

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1 In *My 60 Memorable Games* Fischer analyses this continuation out to a win, beginning with 16 ♕xe6+ ♗d7 17 ♕xe7 – *Editor's note*.

no way of coming into play, whereas White can himself gradually build up a dangerous attack.

**20 ♖xf1 ♕xe6**

Agreeing to the draw. Possible was 20...♖g6 but even then, by continuing 21 ♕xe7 ♖xe6 22 ♕c5+ ♔b8 23 a6! White would be able to draw without difficulty.

**21 ♔xg2 ♕g4+**

**½-½**

Game 37

**Tal – Ståhlberg**

*Television Game, Stockholm 1961*

French Defence

Every year traditional Christmas tournaments are held in a number of towns. The best known competition of this type is the tournament in the small English town of Hastings, which was first held as early as 1895. Recently they have begun to hold such tournaments in Holland (Beverwijk), and also in Sweden.

It was to the New Year tournament in Stockholm that Soviet grandmasters Kotov and I were invited. It should be added that the 1960-1961 Tournament was timed to coincide with an important jubilee of the Swedish Chess Organisation. Early in 1911 the Stockholm Chess Club was formed, and for half a century now it has been the centre for Swedish chess players. Therefore, the Jubilee Tournament was, if one can so express it, especially festive.

We arrived in the Swedish capital on 28th December at 10 o'clock local time. It turned out that we had been expected since the previous evening, but even so we had flown in just at the right time – we still had at our disposal a whole half hour before the start of a televised game. Of course, the time set aside for us to rest flew past unnoticed, and when we assembled in the television studio, we felt somewhat exhausted.

My opponent was the well known Swedish Grandmaster Ståhlberg. The time control was not altogether normal – 50 minutes for the whole game, so that the viewers should be able to follow the game in its entirety. Thinking, however, that to follow the game for two hours at a stretch would also not be easy, the Swedish television authorities decided to extend the pleasure over three days. This was perhaps more interesting for the spectators, and also less tiring for the participants, since every 35-40 minutes there was an interval. Grandmaster Kotov took the role of commentator. Now I can perhaps disclose a small secret. The game was shown from 6th to 8th January, and the participants had to give their word that until the end of the transmission no word of the game was to appear in the press. Therefore I only had the chance to 'boast' about my win following the conclusion of the tournament.

**1 e4 e6**
**2 d4 d5**

**3 e5 c5**
**4 c3 ♘c6**
**5 ♘f3 ♕b6**
**6 ♗d3**

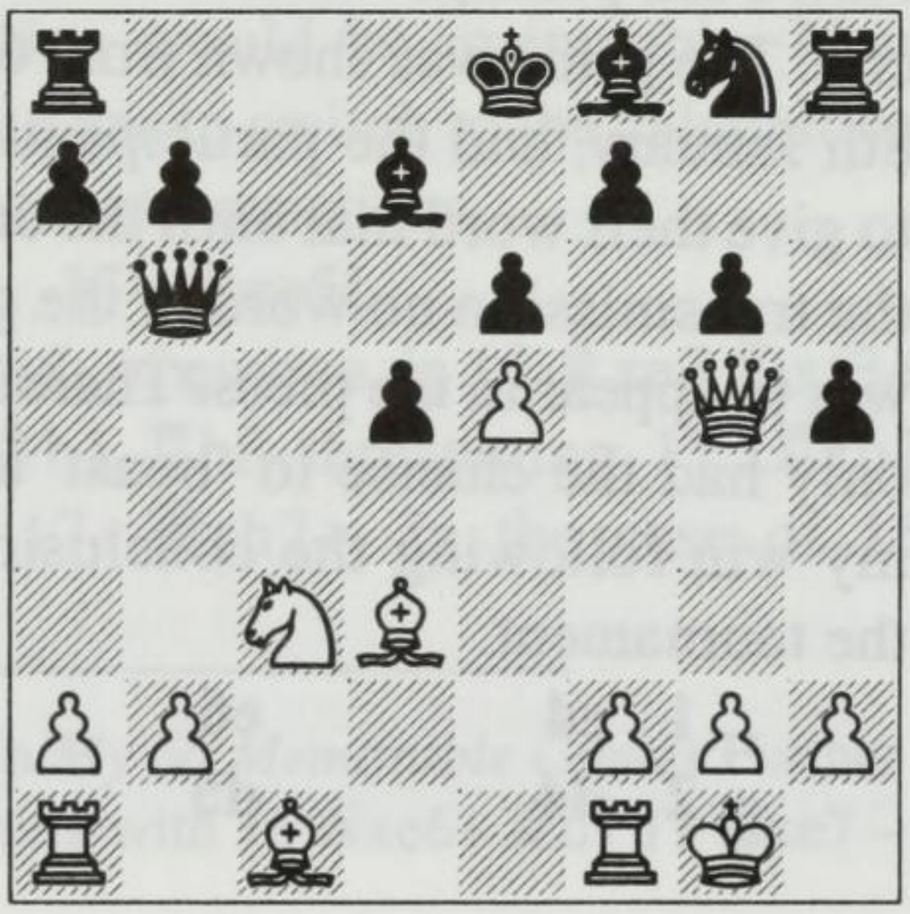
In recent times 6 a3 has been met more often, but after 6...c4 it is difficult for White to undertake anything active. The move in the game involves the sacrifice of a pawn.

**6 ... cxd4**
**7 cxd4 ♗d7**
**8 0-0 ♘xd4**
**9 ♘xd4 ♕xd4**
**10 ♘c3 ♕b6**

It is dangerous to accept the sacrifice of the second pawn, since after 10...♕xe5 11 ♖e1 ♕d6 12 ♘b5 ♕b8 13 ♕f3 White's initiative appears most imposing. However, the move in the game is not the best. Strongest, perhaps, is 10...a6, after which considerable efforts are still required of White in order to drive the queen from her active post on d4.

**11 ♕g4 h5**
**12 ♕g5 g6** *(D)*

In this position the first interval was announced.



*W*

**13 a4!**

At the moment the sacrifice of a piece 13 ♗xg6 fxg6 14 ♕xg6+ ♔d8 does not work. White appears to be intending to play 14 ♘b5, but this is not the basic aim of the move a4. As soon as Black plays ...a6, a serious defect immediately appears in his position – his queen is undefended. In particular, on 13...a6 possible is the immediate 14 ♗xg6 fxg6 15 ♕xg6+ ♔d8 16 ♘xd5! with an irresistible attack.

**13 ... ♗h6**

Stronger perhaps was 13...♗e7 14 ♕f4 ♕b4 15 ♘b5 ♔d8 although even then White's position is worth the sacrificed pawn.

**14 ♕h4 a6**

All the same Black could not refrain from making this more.

**15 ♗xh6 ♘xh6**

No better was 15...♖xh6.

**16 ♕f6 ♖f8**
**17 ♘xd5 ♕d8**

After 17...♕c5 18 ♘e3 ♕e7 19 ♕f4 White has a clear advantage.

**18 ♕f4 exd5**
**19 ♕xh6 ♕e7**
**20 ♕e3**

More accurate was 20 ♕f4. Here the game was adjourned for the second time.

**20 ... ♗c6**

The active 20...♕b4 would have caused White more difficulties.

**21 ♖ac1**

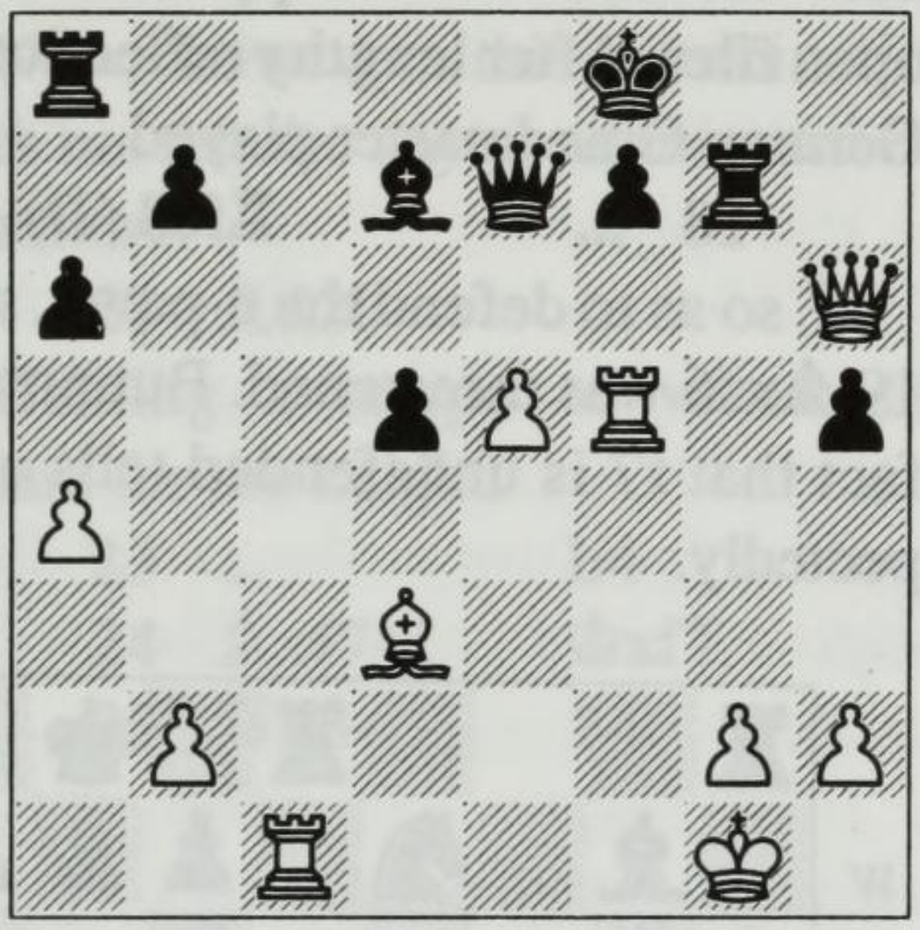
On 21 ♕d4 I didn't like 21...a5 followed by 22...♕b4.

**21 ... ♖g8**

**22 f4 ♔f8**
**23 f5 gxf5**
**24 ♕h6+**

Not, of course, 24 ♖xf5? ♖xg2+!

**24 ... ♖g7**
**25 ♖xf5 ♗d7** *(D)*




At this moment both players had about 5-6 minutes remaining, so I decided to try to complicate the game still further, so as to force Black to solve more complex problems.

**26 ♖c7 ♕e6**

Reckoning on 27 ♕xh5? ♕b6+, but White has an intermediate check at his disposal.

**27 ♕h8+ ♖g8**
**28 ♕xh5**

It turns out that 28...♕b6+ is answered by the simple 29 ♔h1, and both rooks are immune.

**28 ... ♖c8**
**29 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8**
**30 ♖f6 ♕e7**
**31 ♕h6+ ♖g7**
**32 ♖d6**

Now ♕f6 is threatened.

**32 ... ♕xe5**

Hoping to confuse matters in the case of 33 ♖d8+ ♔e7 34 ♖xc8 ♕d4+ 35 ♔h1 ♕xd3, but White's reply is immediately decisive.

**33 ♕h8+ 1-0**

## Game 38
## Tal – Unzicker
*Stockholm 1961*
Ruy Lopez

**1 e4 e5**
**2 ♘f3 ♘c6**
**3 ♗b5 a6**
**4 ♗a4 ♘f6**
**5 0-0 ♗e7**
**6 ♖e1 b5**
**7 ♗b3 d6**
**8 c3 0-0**
**9 h3 ♘b8**
**10 d4 ♘bd7**

It is interesting that the German Grandmaster adopts against me the same system that I played against him about six months previously. On this occasion White does not avoid the continuation favoured by theory.

**11 c4 c6**
**12 c5!**

As far as I am aware, prior to this game the move c5 had not been met in this opening. White begins an immediate fight in the centre. Black's natural reaction does not appear completely convincing.

**12 ... ♕c7**

12...dxc5 as in the game Averbakh-Furman (28th USSR Championship),

did not justify itself. Strongest, probably, is 12...♗b7.

**13 cxd6 ♗xd6**
**14 ♗g5!**

This is the whole point. The threat of 15 dxe5 is most unpleasant, since after it Black must either part with one of the bishops or else allow a serious weakening of his kingside. All he can do is decide which of these two evils is the lesser. 14...exd4 15 ♗xf6 is now unsatisfactory. 14...♗b7 is probably best, reconciling himself to a passive position. The move played by Black is directed against the threat of dxe5 but he goes from one misfortune to another, no lesser one.

**14 ... c5**

Now in the case of 15 dxe5 ♗xe5 Black has some counterplay on the queenside which to a certain degree equalises the chances. On the other hand, the weakening of the d5-square must soon tell.

**15 dxc5 ♗xc5**
**16 ♘c3 ♗b7**
**17 ♖c1**

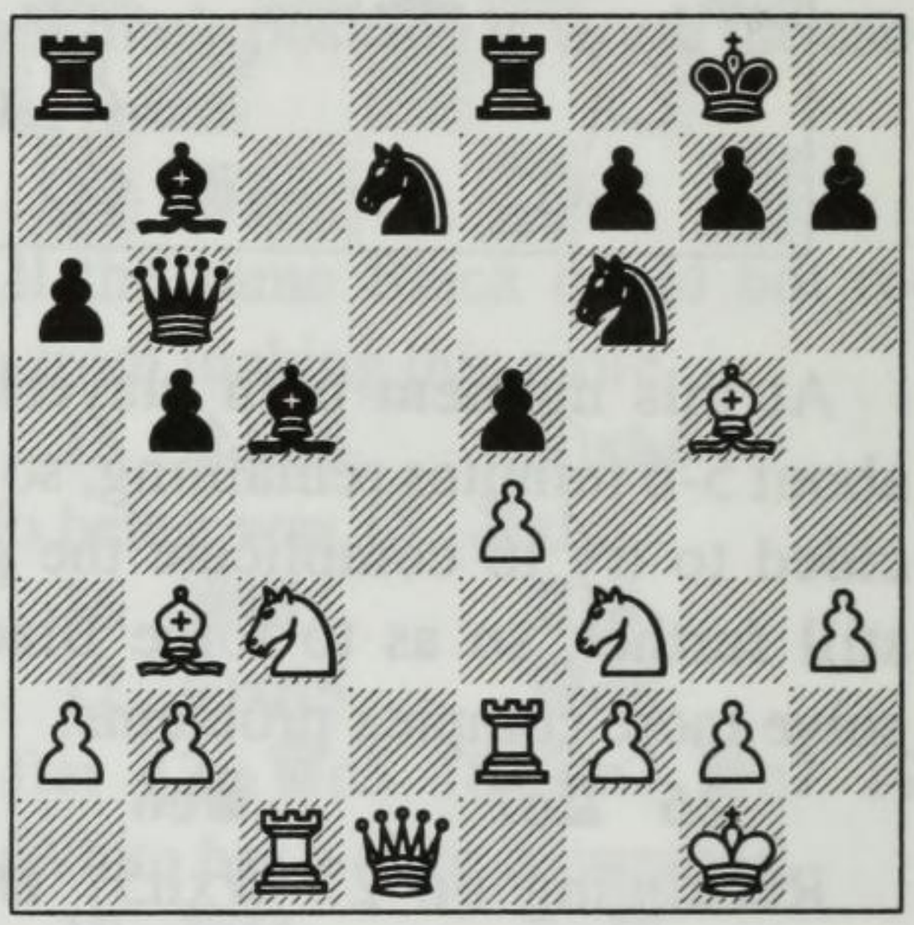
Tempting here was 17 ♘d5. However, I did not like the position resulting from the following variation: 17...♘xd5 18 ♗xd5 ♘b6 19 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 20 ♘xe5 f6 21 ♘d3 ♗xf2+ 22 ♘xf2 fxg5 and Black's actively placed pieces are sufficient compensation for White's central passed pawn. The move in the game is closely associated with the following manoeuvre by the king's rook, after which the pressure down the central files becomes threatening.

**17 ... ♕b6**
**18 ♖e2!**

On the second rank this rook is exceptionally well placed: it defends the one vulnerable point in White's position, f2, and is ready at the first available moment to occupy one of the open files. After lengthy reflection the German Grandmaster played ...

**18 ... ♖fe8** *(D)*

... so as to defend the e-pawn, since 19 ♗xf6 was threatened. But now the fact that f7 is undefended tells unexpectedly.




**19 ♘d5! ♗xd5**

After 19...♘xd5 20 ♗xd5 there is the threat of 21 ♗xf7+.

**20 ♗xd5 ♖ad8**
**21 ♖ec2!**

This is significantly stronger than 21 ♕b3 since White is planning a blow at f7.

**21 ... ♗e7**
**22 ♖c6 ♕a5**

This helps White to carry out the regrouping necessary for a combination.

Against 22...♕b8 I was planning 23 ♗xf6 and on 23...♗xf6 simply 24 ♖xa6, while on 23...♘xf6 a combination decides the game: 24 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 25 ♕b3+ ♔g6 (25...♔f8 26 ♘g5) 26 ♘h4+ ♔h5 27 ♕f3+ ♔xh4 28 ♕f5 g5 29 ♕xh7+!

Now, however, this combination does not require any great material expenditure.

**23 ♗d2!**

Gaining a tempo to vacate the square for the knight.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **23** | **...** | **b4** |
| **24** | **♗xf7+!** | **♔xf7** |
| **25** | **♕b3+** | **1-0** |

Game 39

**Toran – Tal**

*European Team Championship, Oberhausen 1961*

English Opening

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **c4** | **e5** |
| **2** | **♘c3** | **d6** |
| **3** | **g3** | **f5** |
| **4** | **d4!** | |

It is this order of moves that represents the strongest rejoinder against the system adopted by Black. Perhaps Black's best answer was 4...♘f6 or 4...c6, since his striving to complicate the struggle could have had unpleasant consequences.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **4** | **...** | **e4** |
| **5** | **f3!** | **♘f6** |
| **6** | **♗g2** | **exf3** |

Regrettably forced.

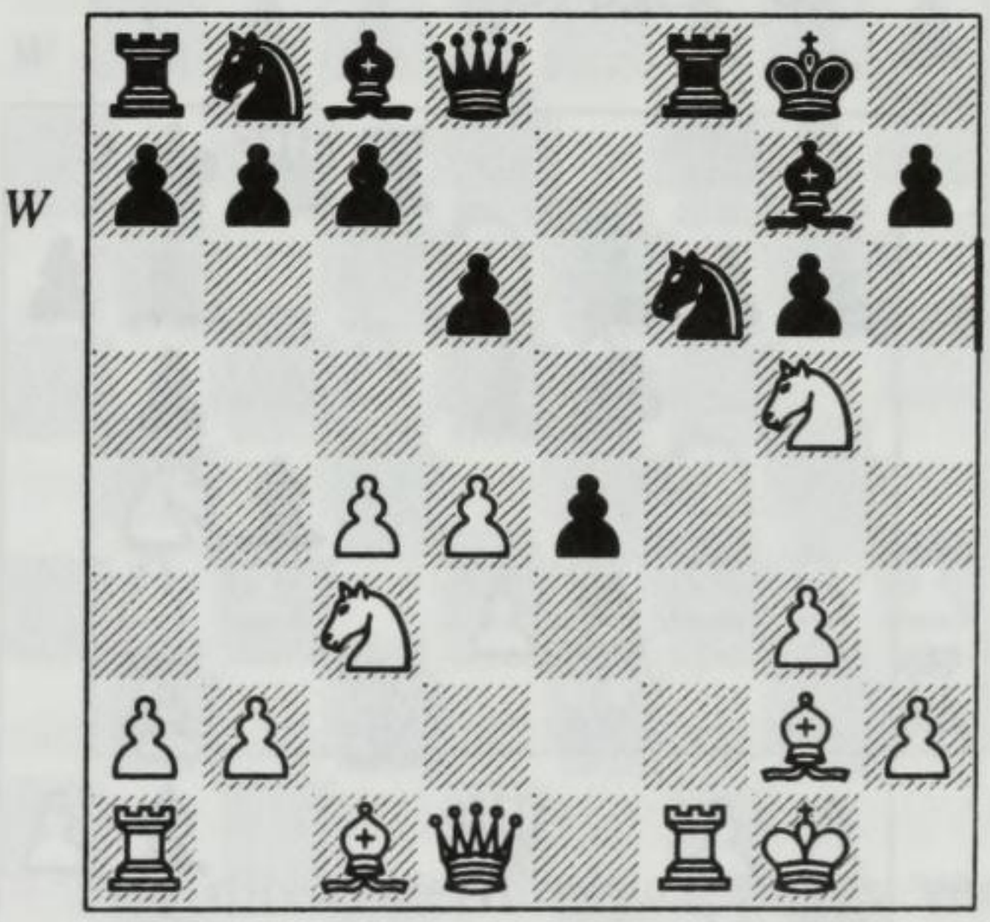
**7 ♘xf3**

The results of the opening are fairly cheerless for Black. Nothing has come of his idea of commencing an attack at the very start of the game. Rather, Black must see to it that his opponent's threats do not become too real. White's basic strategic threat is to play d5 followed by ♘d4. Since it is impossible to prevent this, I decided to try to divert my opponent, by giving him the chance of an attack on my king. Thus, instead of 7...♗e7, I played:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **7** | **...** | **g6** |
| **8** | **0-0** | **♗g7** |
| **9** | **e4!?** | |

This move looks most unpleasant for Black, but even so, 9 d5 was stronger.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **9** | **...** | **fxe4** |
| **10** | **♘g5** | **0-0** *(D)* |




**11 ♘gxe4**

Insufficiently consistent. Here 11 ♘cxe4 would have been much more menacing, maintaining the dangerous knight on g5. In this case I intended to continue 11...♘c6 with the possible

variation 12 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 13 ♗d5+ ♔g7 14 ♘f7 ♖xf7 15 ♗xf7 ♔xf7 16 ♗g5 ♗f5 17 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 18 g4 ♕xd4+ (or 18...♘xd4) 19 ♕xd4 ♘xd4 20 gxf5 ♘xf5.

In the game there followed:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **11** | **...** | **♘xe4** |
| **12** | **♖xf8+** | **♕xf8** |
| **13** | **♘xe4** | **♘c6** |
| **14** | **♗e3** | **♗f5** |
| **15** | **♕d2** | |

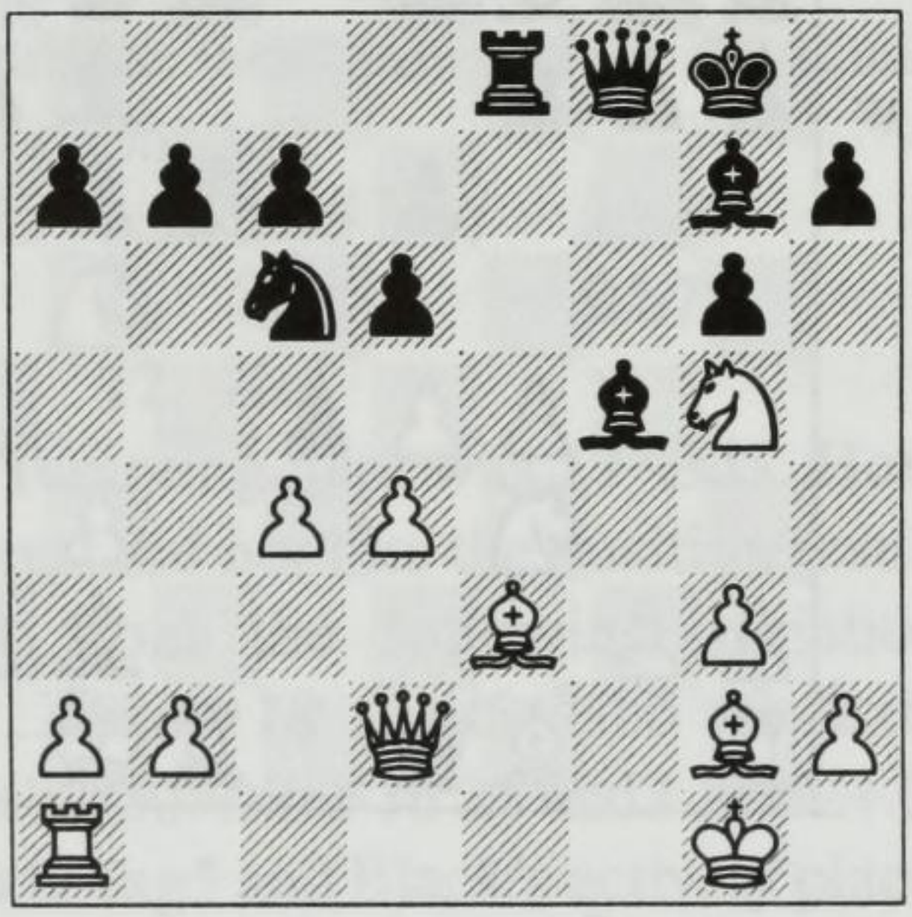
Once again passively played. After the stronger 15 ♘g5 Black would have been forced to sacrifice his queen, just as in the game, but with a tempo less.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **15** | **...** | **♖e8** |

Before this move I declined an offer of a draw. In fact, Black stands better now than he has done in the whole game.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **16** | **♘g5** *(D)* | |

*B*



Now White goes in for complications which turn out unfavourably for him. Preferable was 16 ♘c3.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **16** | **...** | **♖xe3** |
| **17** | **♗d5+** | |

This simplifies Black's task. 17 ♗xc6 was stronger after which I intended to continue either 17...♖e7 18 ♗xb7 c5 with quite good compensation for the pawn, or 17...♕e7 18 ♗d5+ ♔f8 19 ♘xh7+ ♔e8 20 ♔f2 ♗h6 21 ♖e1 with an unclear ending, or, most probably, 17...♖d3 18 ♕xd3 ♗xd3 19 ♗d5+ ♔h8 20 ♘f7+ ♕xf7 21 ♗xf7 ♗xd4+ 22 ♔g2 ♗xb2 23 ♖d1 and White should by no means lose. In making the move in the game, Toran evidently underestimated Black's 19th move.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **17** | **...** | **♔h8** |
| **18** | **♘f7+** | **♕xf7** |
| **19** | **♗xf7** | **♖d3!** |

This is the point of the combination. Black wins a most important tempo by exploiting the fact that the white queen has no good retreat square. Weaker would be 19...♗xd4+ 20 ♔g2 since now on 20...♖d3 21 ♕h6 is very strong[1].

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **20** | **♕e2** | **♗xd4+** |
| **21** | **♔g2** | **♘e5** |
| **22** | **♖d1** | |

On 22 ♗d5, 22...c6 decides.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **22** | **...** | **♖e3** |

The concluding manoeuvres are not without interest.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **23** | **♕f1** | **♗e4+** |
| **24** | **♔h3** | **♖f3** |
| **25** | **♕e2** | **♗f5+** |
| | | **0-1** |

---

1 After 21 ♕h6, Black has an immediate draw by 21...♗e4+.

Game 40
**Ivkov – Tal**
*Bled 1961*
King's Indian Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **d4** | **♘f6** |
| **2** | **c4** | **g6** |
| **3** | **♘c3** | **♗g7** |
| **4** | **e4** | **d6** |
| **5** | **♘f3** | **0-0** |
| **6** | **♗e2** | **e5** |
| **7** | **dxe5** | |

A rather unpleasant surprise. The exchange of queens is a cold shower on Black's aggressive intentions. Apart from this, two psychological factors probably influenced the choice of such a continuation. Firstly, practical experience in my match against Botvinnik showed that it was possible to reckon on success even with this modest plan, and secondly, a longish absence from tournament play made Ivkov cautious.

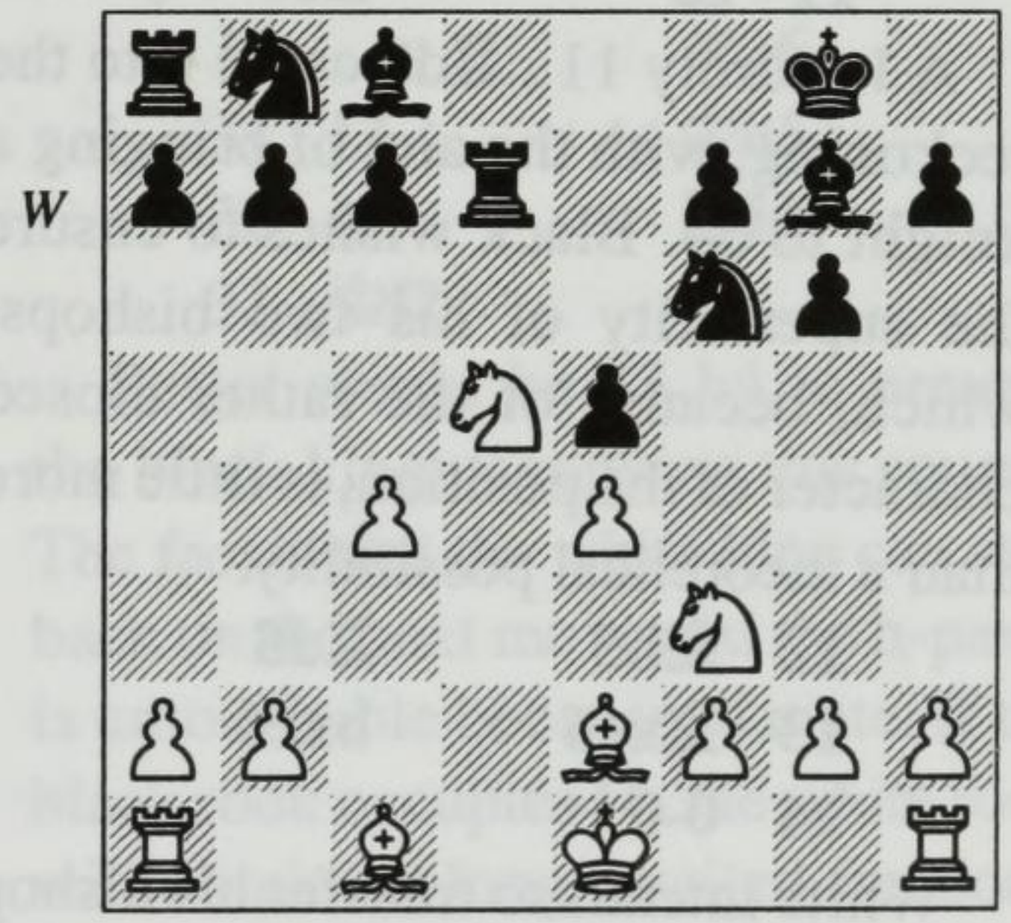
Objectively speaking, a premature exchange in the centre can create no problems for Black.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **7** | **...** | **dxe5** |
| **8** | **♕xd8** | **♖xd8** |
| **9** | **♘d5** | |

I believe 9 ♘d5 has never before been played in this position. Normal is 9 ♗g5 ♖e8 10 0-0-0 with apparently equal play. Obviously the variation in this game was influenced by the 13th game of my return match with Botvinnik, where the Sämisch variation was played: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3 e5 7 dxe5 dxe5 8 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 9 ♘d5 ♘xd5 10 cxd5 c6. The difference in the present game is that White's e-pawn is not defended by his f-pawn. If Black wants a sharp game, and that was the case in this game, he will never be satisfied with the variation 9...♘xd5 10 cxd5 c6 11 ♗g5 since the most Black can then achieve is a draw, and only after extremely precise play. 9...♘a6 10 ♗g5 ♖d6 11 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 12 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 13 ♘xe5 ♖e6 14 f4 f6 15 ♘g4 is no good either.

I thought for 15 minutes and opted for an unusual continuation which, although not especially strong, decisively influenced the game's result.

**9 ... ♖d7!?** *(D)*




The move certainly appears very clumsy, but White's e-pawn is attacked. Although my opponent now thought for an hour and a half, his reply was psychologically wrong.

**10 ♘xf6+**

This move could have been made after only two minutes' thought. The

correctness of 9...♖d7 depends exclusively on the variation 10 ♘xe5 ♘xd5 11 ♘xd7 ♘b4 12 ♘xb8 ♘c2+ 13 ♔d1 ♘xa1 14 ♗f4! ♗xb2! (14...♖xb8 15 ♗xc7 ♖a8 16 ♔c1 is weak) 15 ♗xc7 a5! A most interesting position would come about in which White would, by any means, have to forestall the manoeuvre ...a4-a3 with a subsequent ...♘b3. Although it is much more difficult for the white knight to withdraw from b8, White does have one pawn more.

Certainly the game's progress does not yet indicate Black's supremacy, but his advantage of an hour and a half must be expressed sooner or later.

**10 ... ♗xf6**
**11 c5 ♘c6**

A leisurely 11...♖d8 came into the reckoning, with the aim of bringing a knight to d4. Black wishes to ensure the superiority of his two bishops, which, because of the rather closed character of the position, is little more than a theoretical possibility.

**12 ♗b5 ♖d8**
**13 ♗xc6 bxc6**
**14 0-0**

White intends to transfer his bishop to the long diagonal to put pressure on the pawn at e5. With his next move Black begins to resist that plan.

**14 ... ♗g4**
**15 ♗e3**

15 b3 is weaker because of ...♖d3.

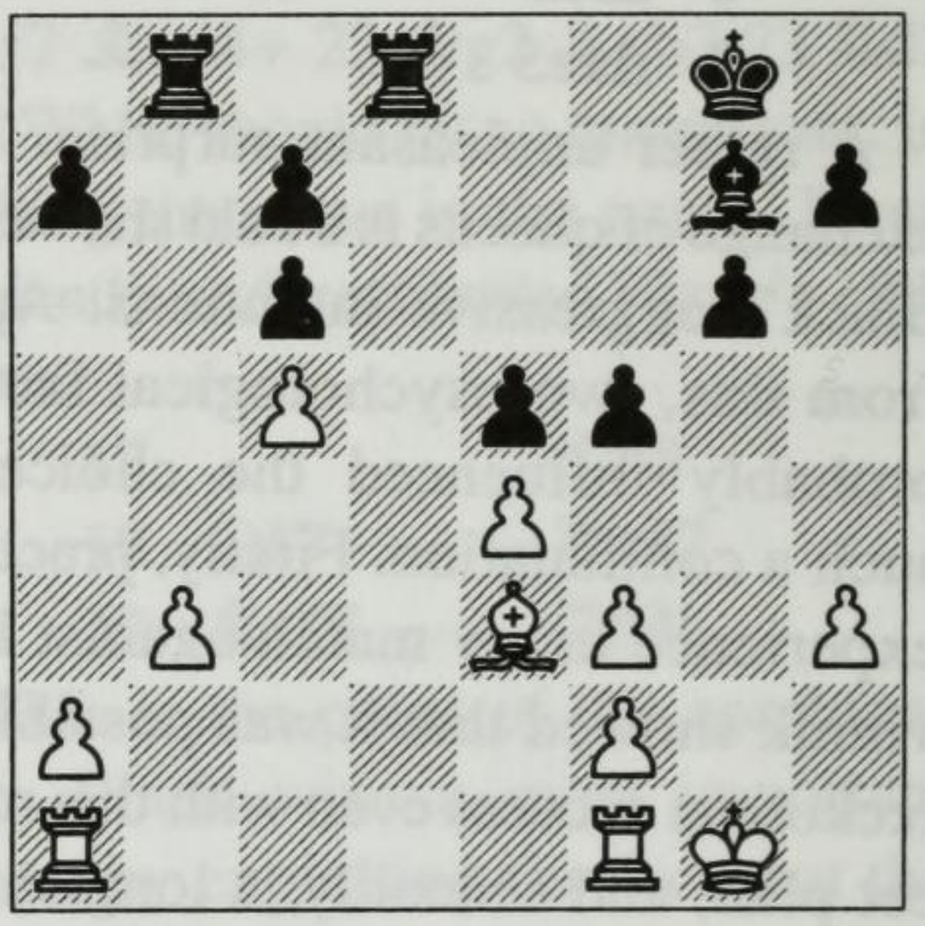
**15 ... ♖ab8**
**16 b3 ♗g7**
**17 h3**

I was intending to reply to 17 ♘d2 with 17...f5 18 f3 f4 19 fxg4 fxe3 20 ♘c4 ♖d4 with the more favourable ending.

**17 ... ♗xf3**

A decision of questionable value. 17...♗d7, in the hope of later making use of both bishops, leads to a more strenuous battle.

**18 gxf3 f5** *(D)*



**19 ♖ad1**

Although this move does not yet give Black the advantage, it marks the beginning of a mistaken plan. It would be much stronger to move the king's rook to d1 and use the queen's rook for the manoeuvre ♖ac1-c4-a4. White is afraid of 19...f4 in reply to 19 ♖fd1 but then, after 20 ♗d2, the bishop could move to a5. The variation 20...♖d3 21 ♗a5 ♖xf3 22 ♔g2, however, did not enter Black's thoughts at all.

**19 ... ♔f7**

From now on, White has some difficulties to contend with, and the c-pawn might become weak.

**20 ♗g5**

Even this is not bad in itself, although moves 19 and 20 lead to a decisive mistake. It may be relevant to mention that White had already used 90% of his time. Stronger would be the immediate 20 ♗d2 and only in reply to 20...♖d4 should he play 21 ♗g5.

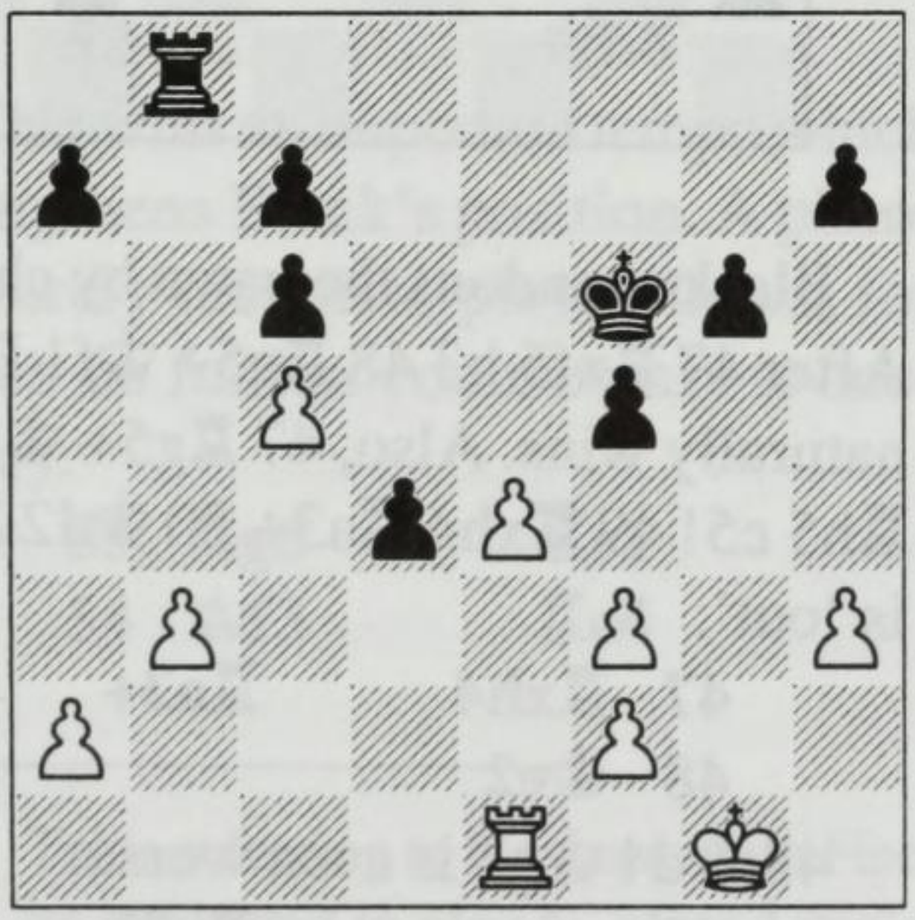
**20 ... ♗f6**
**21 ♗xf6**

In all probability White is already losing. The exchange of bishops is indisputably in Black's favour, as now the black king can reach the weak pawn on h3 via f6-g5-h4. I see no possibility of counterplay for White.

**21 ... ♔xf6**
**22 ♖fe1 ♖d4?**

Confident that victory is already in his pocket, Black is too hasty and again gives White a fine chance of extricating himself. After 22...f4 White would be almost incapable of defending himself.

**23 ♖xd4 exd4** *(D)*



**24 exf5!**

Much stronger than the expected 24 e5+ ♔e6 25 f4 ♔d5 26 e6 d3 27 ♖e5+ ♔d4 28 ♔f1 ♔c3 29 ♔e1 ♔c2.

**24 ... gxf5**
**25 f4**

I considered the ending to be an easy win on account of the passed pawn, but White manages to erect a barricade.

**25 ... d3**
**26 ♔g2 d2**
**27 ♖d1 ♖d8**
**28 ♔f3 ♔g6**
**29 b4 ♔h5**
**30 ♔g3**

Obviously the white king need not hurry to the d-pawn, which is effectively under the rook's control.

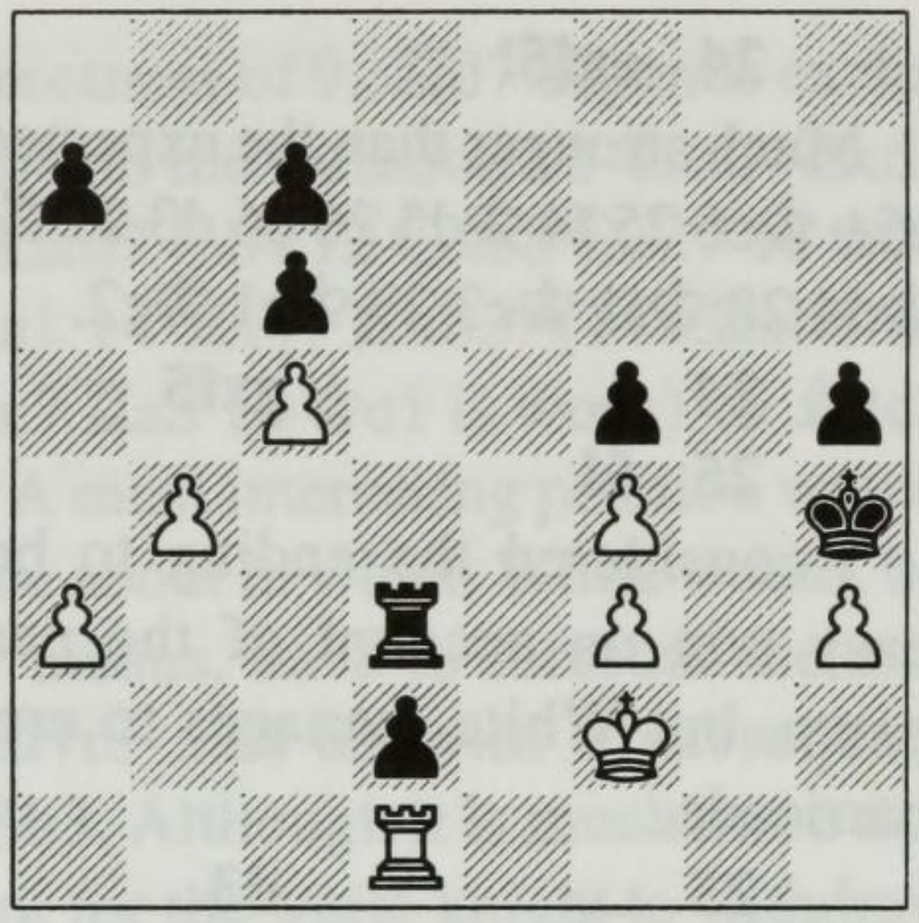
**30 ... ♔g6**
**31 f3 ♔h5**
**32 a3 ♖d4**
**33 ♔f2**

Better would be 33 h4 to prevent the black king occupying this square. The fact is that the white king can step back on the next move and the h-pawn is untouchable because of mate. If the black rook occupies f4, the white rook will obtain its long awaited freedom. After 33 h4 White would probably only have to take care not to overstep the time limit.

**33 ... ♔h4**
**34 ♔g2 ♖d3**

The action is now one file removed, and that makes White's task considerably greater.

**35 ♔f2 h5** *(D)*




Envisaging the development of events, Black advances his potentially passed pawn.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **36** | **♔g2** | **♖xa3** |
| **37** | **♖xd2** | **♖b3** |
| **38** | **♖a2?** | |

After this, White's position is again lost. It would be stronger to activate his rook immediately with 38 ♖d7 ♖b2+ 39 ♔f1 and at best Black would be able to secure an ending with his passed f- and h-pawns, which is a book draw.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **38** | **...** | **♖xb4** |
| **39** | **♖xa7** | **♖b2+** |
| **40** | **♔f1** | **♖c2** |

This is the difference: Black also gets a passed pawn on the c-file.

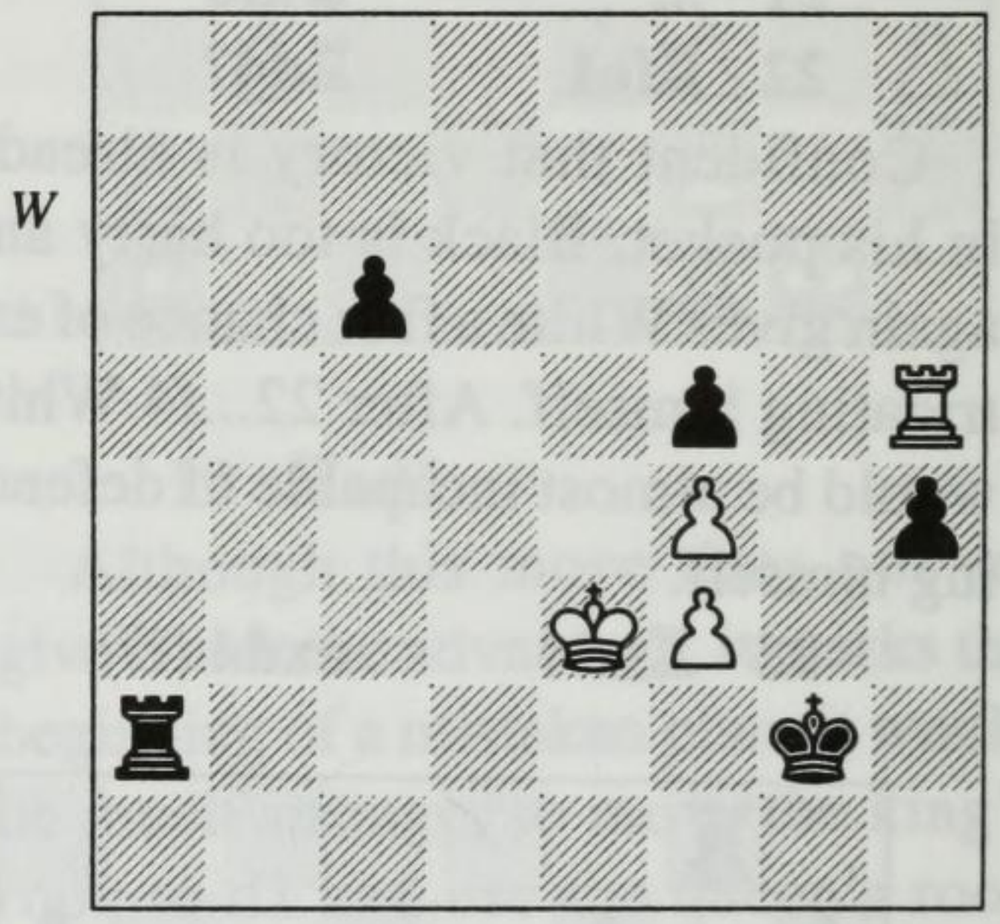
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **41** | **♖xc7** | **♖xc5** |
| **42** | **♔f2** | **♔xh3** |
| **43** | **♖g7** | **h4** |

The game was adjourned at this point. It was obvious that the sealed move was 44 ♖g5 since that ties down Black's pieces to the greatest extent.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **44** | **♖g5** | **♖a5** |
| **45** | **♖h5** | |

This position offers Black a comparatively easy path to victory; after 45...♖b5 46 ♖g5 ♖c5 White is forced either to let the black king move to h2 (47 ♖h5 ♖c2+ 48 ♔e3 ♔g3 49 ♖g5+ ♔h2) and the h-pawn advances, or to let the c-pawn advance (47 ♖g8 ♖c2+ 48 ♔e3 c5). In my adjournment analysis I could find no satisfactory defence for White, but just before the resumption I thought of another winning plan and decided to implement it. It was based on some of the specific features of this position, and it surprised my opponent.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **45** | **...** | **♖a2+** |
| **46** | **♔e3** | **♔g2!** *(D)* |




Black abandons the pawn by choice. After 47 ♖xf5 h3 48 ♖g5+ ♔f1 Black naturally wins. Also, 47 ♖g5+ ♔f1 48 ♖h5 c5! 49 ♖xh4 ♖a3+ 50 ♔d2 ♖xf3 is 'out'.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **47** | **♖xh4** | **♖a3+** |
| **48** | **♔e2** | |

48 ♔d4 ♔g3 is even worse.

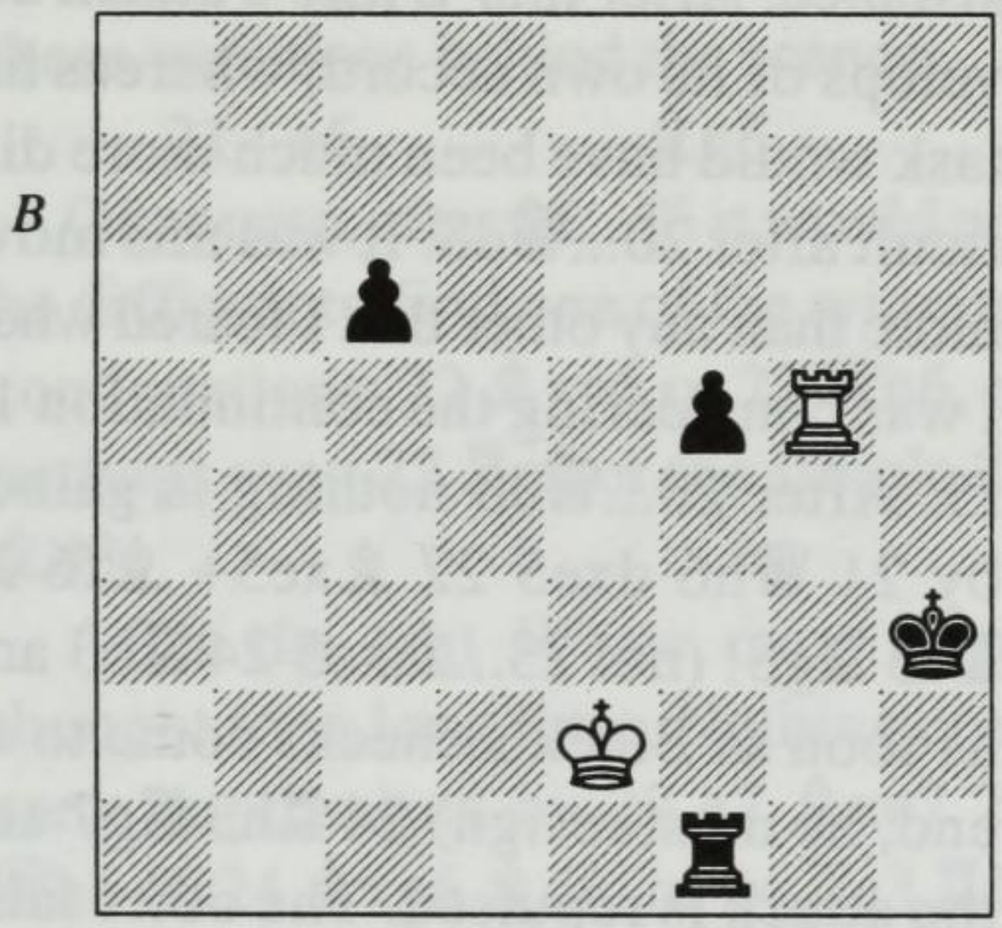
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **48** | **...** | **♖xf3** |

**49 ♖h5**

This creates the most serious problems for Black.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **49** | **...** | **♖xf4** |
| **50** | **♖g5+** | **♔h3** |
| **51** | **♔e3** | **♖f1** |
| **52** | **♔e2** *(D)* | |

Black's task is no longer complicated. The main variation would be 52 ♖g6 c5 53 ♖c6 ♔g3 54 ♖g6+ ♔h4 55 ♖c6 f4+! 56 ♔e4 (56 ♔e2 ♖c1 57 ♔f3 ♔g5) 56...♔g5! 57 ♖xc5+ ♔g4 and before us is a position which is already theoretically decided.




**52 ... ♔h4**

This wins an important tempo which strengthens Black's position. A phase of purely technical play follows, for which no further commentary is necessary.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **53** | **♖g6** | **♖c1** |
| **54** | **♔f3** | **♖c4** |
| **55** | **♔e3** | **c5** |
| **56** | **♔f3** | **♖g4** |
| **57** | **♖c6** | **c4** |
| **58** | **♖c5** | **♔g5** |
| **59** | **♖c6** | **♖e4** |
| **60** | **♖c8** | **♔f6** |
| **61** | **♖c5** | **♔e6** |
| **62** | **♔g2** | **f4** |
| **63** | **♔f3** | **♖d4** |
| **64** | **♖c7** | **♔d5** |
| **65** | **♖c8** | **♖d3+** |
| **66** | **♔xf4** | **c3** |
| **67** | **♖c7** | **♔d4** |
| **68** | **♖c8** | **♖d2** |

**0-1**

Game 41

**Tal – F. Olafsson**

*Bled 1961*

Sicilian Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **c5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **♘c6** |
| **3** | **d4** | **cxd4** |
| **4** | **♘xd4** | **e6** |
| **5** | **♘c3** | **♕c7** |

Once again this variation 'although it is bad'. On this occasion White avoids the move 6 g3[1].

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **6** | **♗e3** | **a6** |
| **7** | **a3** | |

Once bitten, twice shy. Although the advance of the a-pawn is less necessary for White than for Black, in a number of cases it can be very useful[2].

---

1 Tal is referring to his game with Fischer from the same tournament, where after 6 g3 he neglected to play 6...a6 and straight away got into difficulties – *Editor's note*.

2 Also alluding to the Fischer game – *Editor's note*.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **7** | **...** | **♘f6** |
| **8** | **f4** | **d6** |
| **9** | **♕f3** | **♗e7** |
| **10** | **♗d3** | **0-0** |
| **11** | **0-0** | **♗d7** |

11...♘xd4 12 ♗xd4 e5 is more often played, but practice has shown that in this case also White has the initiative.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | **♖ae1** | **b5** |
| **13** | **♕g3** | **♔h8** |
| **14** | **♘xc6** | **♗xc6** |
| **15** | **e5** | |

Weaker is 15 ♗d4 e5! 16 fxe5 ♘h5.

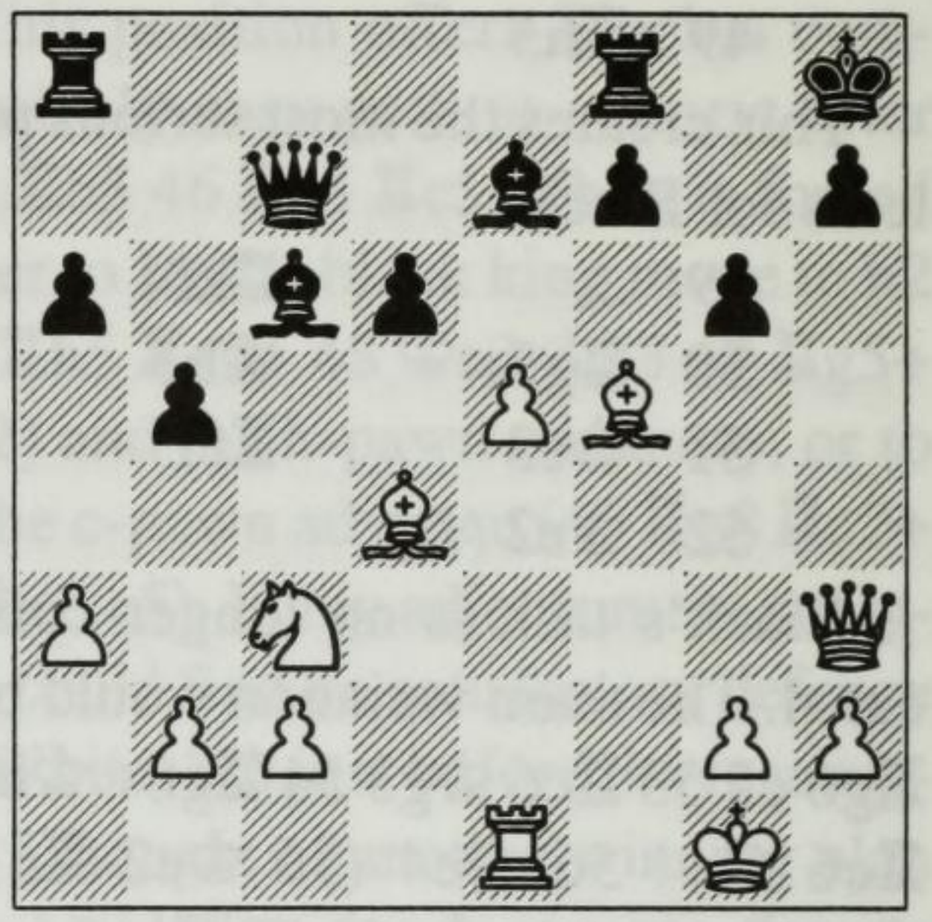
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **15** | **...** | **♘g8** |

15...♘e8 was perhaps stronger. In the case of 15...dxe5 16 fxe5 ♘h5 17 ♕h3 ♕xe5 White has a pleasant choice between the double-edged 18 g4 g6 19 gxh5 gxh5 20 ♔f2, when with his extra piece he should be able to repel the threats, and, if this is not to his taste, the simple 18 ♔h1, after which Black does not appear to have a good reply.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **16** | **♕h3** | **♘h6** |

White has achieved a great deal, and the position demands a combinative solution. True, the combination itself is not all that simple, and White decided on it only after 40 minutes' consideration. The situation is complicated by the fact that White has at his disposal the simple 17 ♔h1, which keeps open a multitude of threats. However, the temptation was too great.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **17** | **f5!** | **♘xf5** |
| **18** | **♖xf5** | **exf5** |
| **19** | **♗xf5** | **g6** |
| **20** | **♗d4** *(D)* | |




| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **20** | **...** | **♔g8** |

Black chooses the path of least resistance. After this White's attack develops of its own accord, whereas his task would have been much more difficult after 20...♕d8. It was this move more than any other that I feared when I was considering the continuation 17 f5. After 20...♕d8 nothing is gained by 21 ♕h6 dxe5 22 ♗xe5+ ♗f6 23 ♖e3 ♖g8! (not 23...♗xe5 24 ♖h3 and as soon as Black's checks come to an end, he must resign) 24 ♖h3 ♖g7 and the attack is repulsed. The other false trail was much more interesting: 21 e6+ ♗f6 22 ♕h4 fxe6 (22...♔g7 23 e7) 23 ♖xe6, and now Black loses both in the case of 23...♗xd4+ 24 ♕xd4+ ♔g8 25 ♖xd6 followed by ♗e6+, and after 23...♔g7 24 ♖xf6! ♖xf6 25 ♗e4, when, despite being two exchanges ahead, he is absolutely helpless. Unfortunately, this variation also does not work, since Black has the murderous reply 23...♗e5!!, which forces decisive simplification. However, the idea of exploiting the undefended

position of Black's bishop on c6 prompted me to continue my searches, and in the end the following possibility was found: 21 exd6+ ♗f6 22 ♕h4 ♔g7 (22...♗xd4+ 23 ♕xd4+ ♔g8 24 ♗e4 ♖e8 25 ♖d1, and White has more than enough play for the exchange) and now 23 ♗d7!! (with the threats of 24 ♗xc6 and 24 ♖e7) 23...♗xd7 24 ♘d5 ♗xd4+ 25 ♕xd4+, and both in the case of 25...f6 26 ♖e7+, and after 25...♔h6 26 ♖e4 f6[1] 27 ♖e7 the attack cannot be repulsed.

Unfortunately, the move 20...♔g8, which was played *a tempo*, left all these variations behind the scenes.

**21 e6 ♗g5**

Of course, after 21...f6 it would not be difficult to find one of the winning continuations: 22 ♗xg6 or 22 ♕h6, or perhaps even 22 ♖e3 or the simple 22 ♗d3.

After the text White once again thought for a long time. Nothing concrete is promised by 22 e7 ♗xe7 23 ♕h6 f6 24 ♗xg6 ♗d8, or 24 ♖e3 ♖f7 25 ♗e6 ♗f8, or 24 ♗e6+ ♔h8 25 ♖e3 ♖ae8! 26 ♖h3 ♗d8, or, finally, 24 ♗e6+ ♔h8 25 ♗d5 ♗b7. Therefore he chooses another path.

**22 exf7+ ♖xf7**
**23 ♗xg6! ♖g7**

After the relatively better 23...♖e7 White had a choice between 24 ♖e6 and 24 ♖f1, in both cases threatening 25 ♗xh7+. Black hopes, by giving back the exchange, to get at least some sort of play, but the following manoeuvre by White shatters his illusions.

**24 ♕e6+ ♔h8**
**25 ♗e8!**

Forcing the exchange of the light-squared bishops, which makes things simple. True, both players had only a few minutes left on their clocks, and this naturally lowered the quality of the play.

**25 ... h6**
**26 ♗xc6 ♕xc6**
**27 ♘e4**

It would have been mortifying to have overlooked 27...♗e3+.

**27 ... ♖e8**
**28 ♕g6**

Simpler was 28 ♕f7 which forces 28...♖e5.

**28 ... ♖e7**
**29 h4**

White spent his remaining minutes on deciding that the continuation 29 ♘xg5 ♖xe1+ 30 ♔f2 would only give him a draw after 30...♖e2+ and so took the decision to transpose into an ending. There followed, at lightning speed:

**29 ... ♕d5**
**30 ♗xg7+ ♖xg7**
**31 ♕xd6 ♕xd6**
**32 ♘xd6 ♗xh4**
**33 ♖e8+ ♖g8**

Similarly hopeless is 33...♔h7 34 ♘f5 ♖g4 35 ♖e6.

**34 ♘f7+ ♔g7**
**35 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8**

---

1 After 26...g5! there is no obvious win.

**36 ♘xh6+ ♔h7**
**37 ♘f5 ♗g5**
**38 b3 1-0**

Before he could play 38...♔g6, Black overstepped the time limit.

Game 42

**Tal – Matanović**

*Bled 1961*

Nimzo-Indian Defence

**1 d4 ♘f6**
**2 c4 e6**
**3 ♘c3 ♗b4**
**4 a3**

The Sämisch variation. It is almost as if White wished to let it be understood that the occupation of c3 was incorrect and that consequently he was not ashamed of losing a tempo.

**4 ... ♗xc3+**
**5 bxc3 d6**

The system employed in this game by the Yugoslav Grandmaster is not particularly popular. The usual moves, 5...c5 or 5...0-0, are more active.

**6 f3 e5**
**7 e4 0-0**
**8 ♗g5**

Probably this is not the strongest. Since White wants to prevent the manoeuvre ...♘h5-f4 he resorts to an unnatural development of his kingside pieces. The usual 8 ♗d3 ♘h5 9 ♘e2 is simpler and stronger.

**8 ... ♖e8**
**9 ♘e2**

This is already almost forced. 9 ♗d3 would be no good because of 9...exd4 10 cxd4 ♘xe4! 11 ♗xd8 ♘c3+.

**9 ... h6**

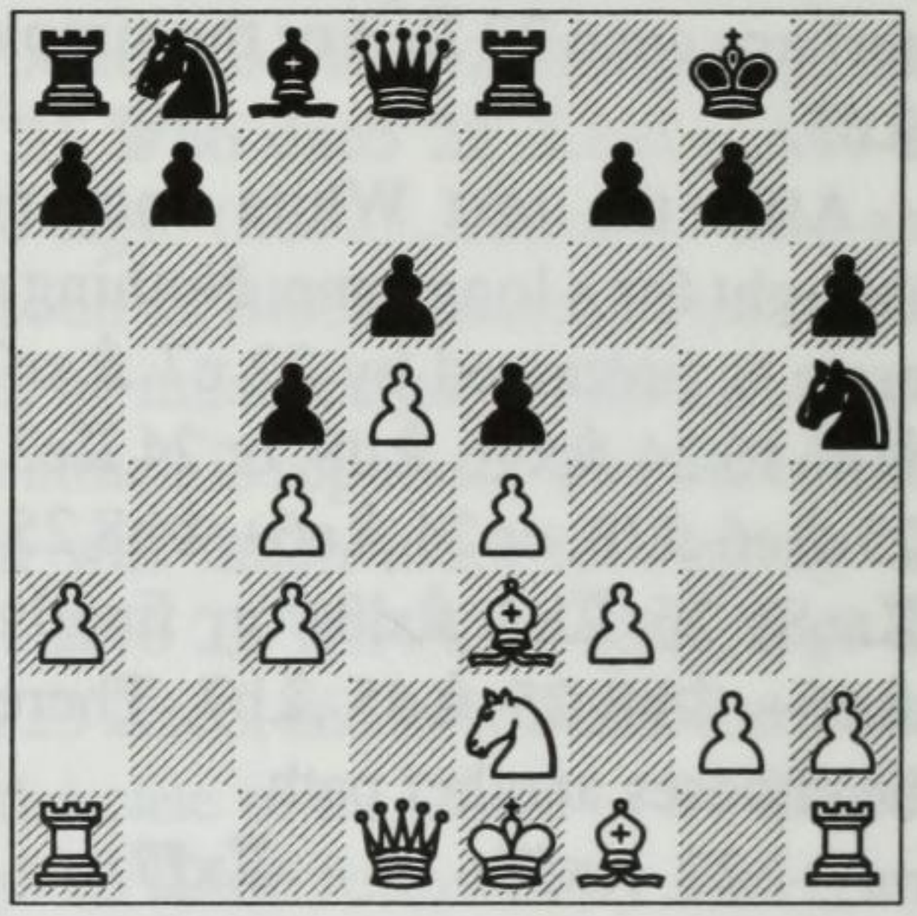
This weakening move is not inevitable. 9...♘c6 is a possibility.

**10 ♗e3 c5?**

This is a positional error with unpleasant consequences. Under no circumstances should Black have given White the chance of closing the centre so easily, since now the c4-pawn, White's Achilles' heel in this variation, is quite safe. Any other move by Black would probably be better.

**11 d5 ♘h5** *(D)*

Forced. After 12 g4 Black was threatened with death by suffocation, but even now this move is rather unpleasant.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**12 g4 ♘f4**

Matanović made this move almost without thinking, which I found a little surprising. For about half an hour before it, White had been considering the variations which would follow 12...♕f6 and had reached no final

conclusion. 13 ♘g3, prolonging the attack, would be worth considering, or the sharp 13 gxh5 ♕xf3 14 ♖g1 ♕xe3 15 ♕c2 ♕f3 16 0-0-0 with a reckless clash.

After the text-move, the variation 13 ♘xf4 exf4 14 ♗xf4 ♕f6 15 ♕d2 ♗xg4 16 ♗g2 was quite acceptable, with White stunting Black's counterplay.

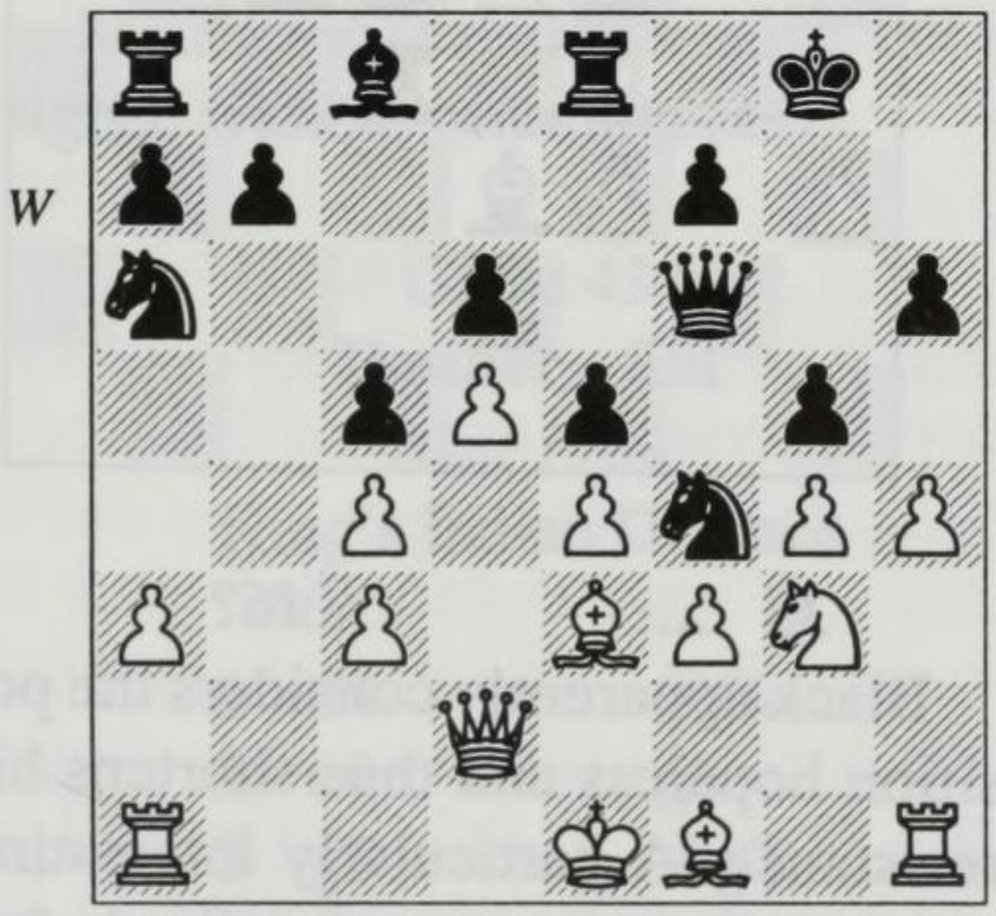
**13 ♕d2 g5**

Stronger is 13...♕f6 because now White's problem is of a purely technical nature.

**14 ♘g3 ♕f6**

**15 h4 ♘a6** *(D)*

Black is intending to construct an impenetrable wall after he has developed all his pieces and removed his king to e7, believing that the queenside is hermetically sealed. Nevertheless, the h-file is quite capable of serving as a springboard and White has constructed his plan on this very fact.



**16 ♖a2 ♔f8**

**17 hxg5 hxg5**

**18 ♕c1**

The queen stands best on this diagonal, as in many variations Black's g-pawn is vulnerable. I must admit to having considered my position fully satisfactory, but my opponent defended with unusual coolness.

**18 ... ♔e7**

**19 ♘h5 ♕g6**

**20 ♖ah2 ♖g8**

20...♔d8 would provoke the sacrifice 21 ♘xf4 gxf4 22 ♗xf4 exf4 23 ♕xf4 with threats from which there is no escape.

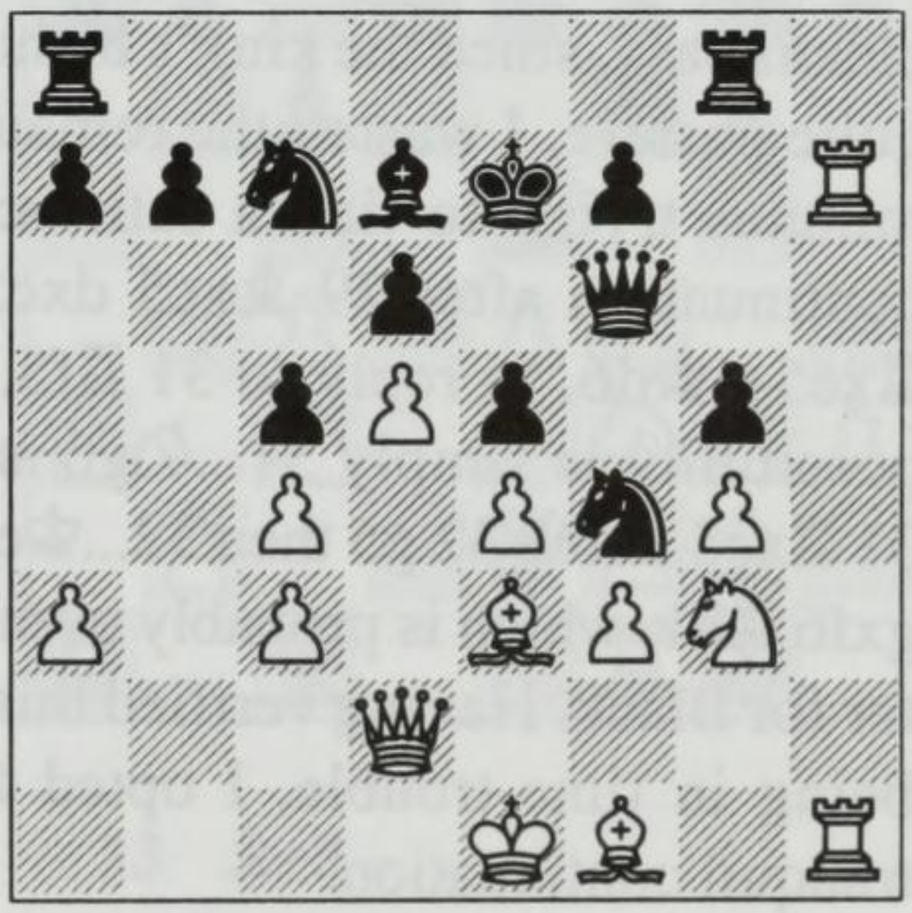
**21 ♘g3 ♘c7**

**22 ♖h7 ♕f6**

**23 ♕d2**

The direct 23 ♖1h6 ♖g6 24 ♘h5 ♘xh5 25 gxh5 ♖xh6 26 ♖xh6 ♕xf3 27 ♗xg5+ ♔d7 is not quite clear, although after 28 ♕e3 White's superiority is indisputable. White will therefore lure the bishop to d7, after which this variation will become much more effective.

**23 ... ♗d7** *(D)*

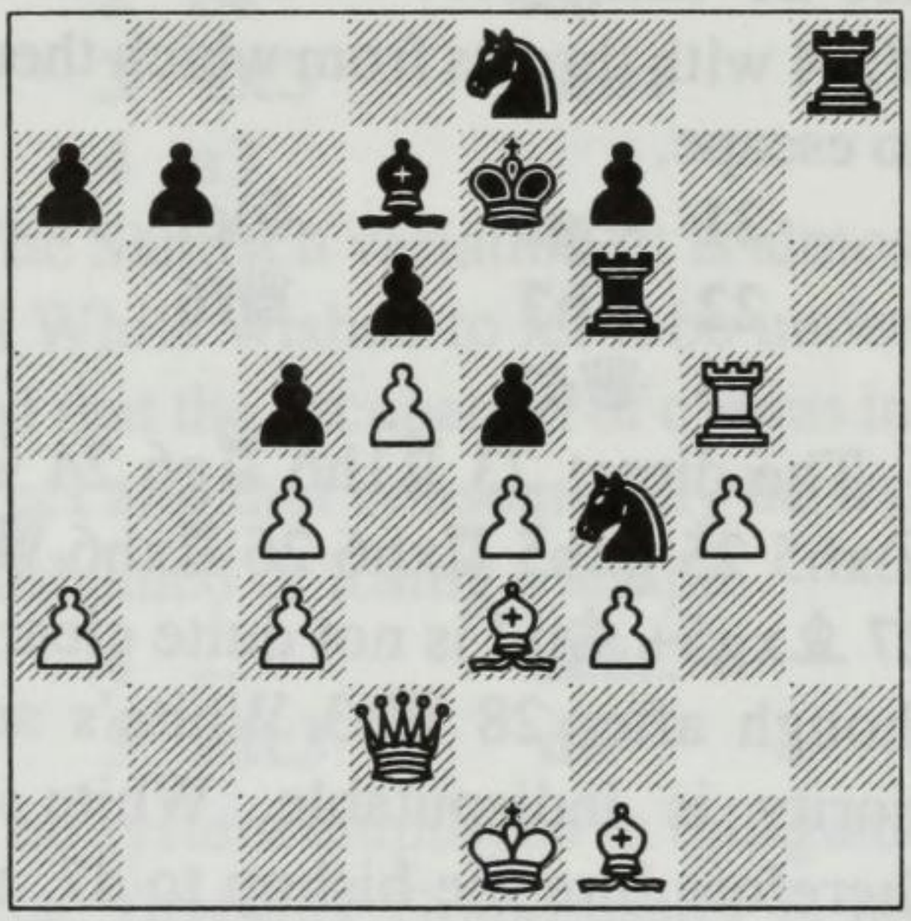


**24 ♖1h6 ♖g6**
**25 ♘h5 ♖xh6**

The queen sacrifice is inevitable, because if 25...♘xh5 26 gxh5 ♖xh6 27 ♖xh6 ♕xf3 28 ♗xg5+ ♔f8 29 ♗f6 ♕xe4+ 30 ♔f2 ♕f5+ 31 ♔g1 White wins immediately.

**26 ♘xf6 ♖xf6**
**27 ♖g7 ♖h8**
**28 ♖xg5 ♘e8** *(D)*

If 28...♖h1, then 29 ♗xf4 followed by 30 ♖h5.




After the text-move both players were short of time. The realisation of White's material superiority is by no means easy, since the king's bishop is quite passive. I wasted the remaining minutes trying to find a satisfactory continuation after 29 ♗xc5 dxc5 30 ♖xe5+ ♔d6. In reply to 31 ♖f5, one possibility is simply 31...♘g6 and if 31 ♖xe8 ♗xe8 32 g5 then 32...♔e5 33 gxf6 ♖h1, which is probably even better for Black. Having verified this and being in time-trouble, I opted for a tranquil continuation.

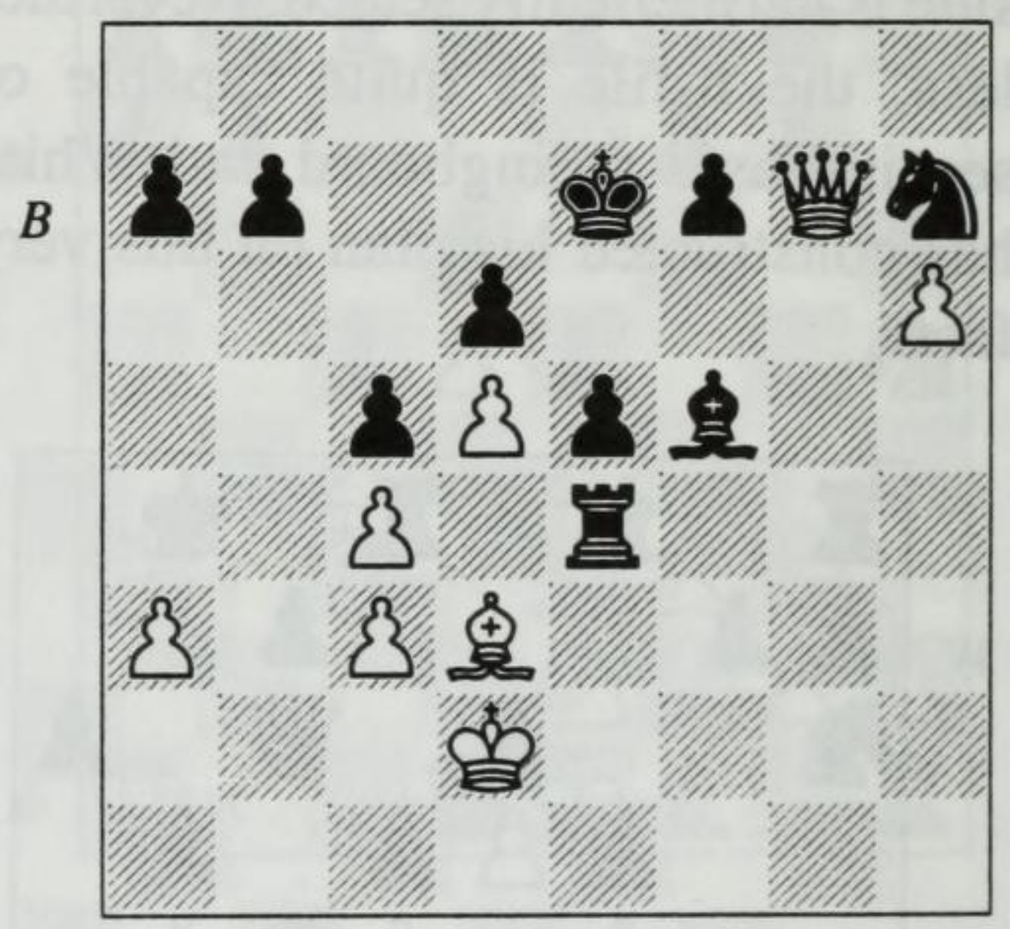
**29 ♕f2 ♖h1**
**30 ♗xf4 ♖xf4**
**31 ♖h5 ♖xh5**

The interesting sacrifice 31...♖xf1+ 32 ♕xf1 ♗xg4 33 ♖h8 ♗xf3 34 ♕h3 would not pay off.

**32 gxh5 ♘f6**

Black has created serious counterplay. Two white pawns are under attack and the attempt 33 h6 ♘xe4 34 ♕h2 ♘g5 appears to be of little value. White therefore decides to return the queen and enter an endgame with one piece more.

**33 ♕h2 ♖xf3**
**34 h6 ♘h7**
**35 ♕g2 ♖f4**
**36 ♕g7 ♖xe4+**
**37 ♔d2 ♗f5**
**38 ♗d3** *(D)*




**38 ... ♘f6?**

Black apparently considers the position hopeless and thus shortens his resistance. A particularly interesting ending would have materialised after 38...♖g4 39 ♗xf5 ♖xg7 40 hxg7 ♘f6

41 ♗h7 ♘g8! 42 ♗xg8 ♔f6 43 ♗h7 ♔xg7 44 ♗f5 ♔f6 45 ♗c8 b6. The winning plan would consist of gradually forcing the advance of the e- and f-pawns to the fourth rank, when the bishop would pin them both down from the front while the king skirted them via h4 and finally took them. The plan is workable in principle, but the pity is that at a suitable moment Black plays ...a6 and ...b5. If White wanted to frustrate this with a4 his bishop would be even more tightly hemmed in and it would be even more difficult for it to return. For that reason, White would probably have to permit ...b5 which would lead to a reduction of material. A detailed analysis of such an interesting ending would take up too much space, but one thing is certain, it would be most difficult to find a way of winning, if one could be found at all.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **39** | **♗xe4** | **♘xe4+** |
| **40** | **♔e1** | **♘f6** |
| **41** | **♕h8** | **a5** |

Matanović sealed this move, but resigned without resuming (**1-0**).

Game 43

**Donner – Tal**

*Bled 1961*

King's Indian Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **d4** | **♘f6** |
| **2** | **c4** | **g6** |
| **3** | **g3** | **♗g7** |
| **4** | **♗g2** | **0-0** |
| **5** | **♘f3** | **d6** |
| **6** | **0-0** | **♘bd7** |
| **7** | **♘c3** | **e5** |
| **8** | **e4** | **c6** |
| **9** | **h3** | **♕b6** |

This variation has recently become popular. Black begins direct action against the square d4.

**10 dxe5**

A rather simple and modest reply. Adherents of the closed game usually play 10 d5 while those who prefer a battle around a disputed centre play 10 ♖e1.

**10 ... dxe5**

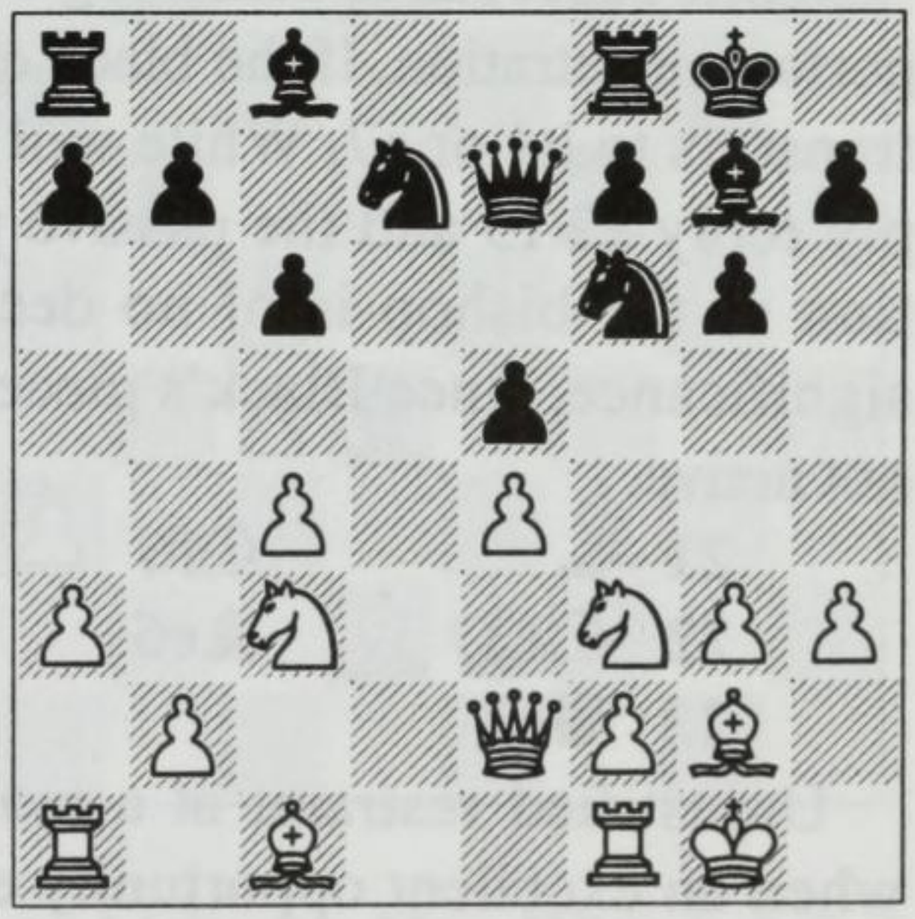
**11 a3**

In the game Najdorf-Bronstein, Moscow 1956, White played 11 ♕e2. The text-move is more logical since it prepares b4.

**11 ... ♕c5**

The black queen moves with tempo to its usual place on e7. My second plan, 11...a5 12 ♗e3 ♕a6, seemed too eccentric.

**12 ♕e2 ♕e7** *(D)*




**13 ♗e3**

The direct 13 b4 would be no good because of 13...a5.

**13 ... ♘c5**
**14 ♕c2**

An exchange on c5 would be strategically wrong; the dark-squared bishop is vitally necessary to White.

**14 ... ♘h5**
**15 b4 ♘e6**
**16 ♖ad1 f5**
**17 exf5 gxf5**
**18 ♘e2 f4?**

This is too risky. Without reason Black relinquishes control of the square e4 so that White, having repulsed the direct threats, will reach a very favourable position. Black's development should have been completed with 18...♗d7, not fearing 19 ♕d2 ♗e8 20 ♕d6 ♕f6. In this way I could quietly have strengthened my initiative on the kingside.

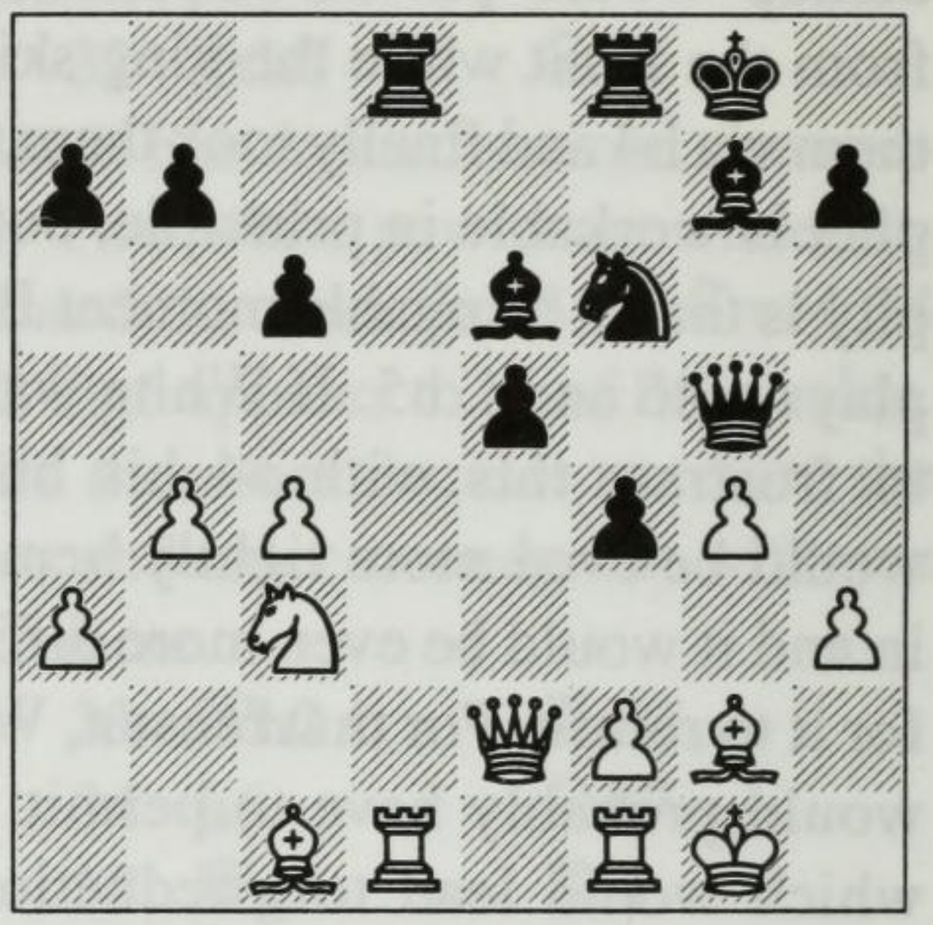
**19 ♗c1 ♘g5**
**20 ♘xg5 ♕xg5**
**21 g4**

White succeeds in achieving an important penetration. If the black queen transfers to h4 or e7, White will simply reply 22 f3 and the passive position of the bishop is of no decisive significance, since Black's pieces are not active.

**21 ... ♘f6**
**22 ♘c3 ♗e6**
**23 ♕e2**

Unjustified restraint at a moment when an excellent opportunity exists for 23 ♖d6. 23...♗xc4 is not 'on' because of 24 ♘e4. White would thus continue ♘e4 and gain a strong initiative on the kingside. When Donner made his move, he was convinced that victory would not escape him.

**23 ... ♖ad8** *(D)*




**24 ♖fe1**

Most interesting; White forces the exchange which Black wanted. It is high time for 24 ♘e4.

**24 ... ♖xd1**
**25 ♖xd1 h5**

The time for this move has arrived, and with it combinative motifs enter the game.

**26 f3 hxg4**
**27 hxg4 ♘xg4!**

The beginning of a complicated multi-variation combination which will eventually ensure a favourable ending for Black.

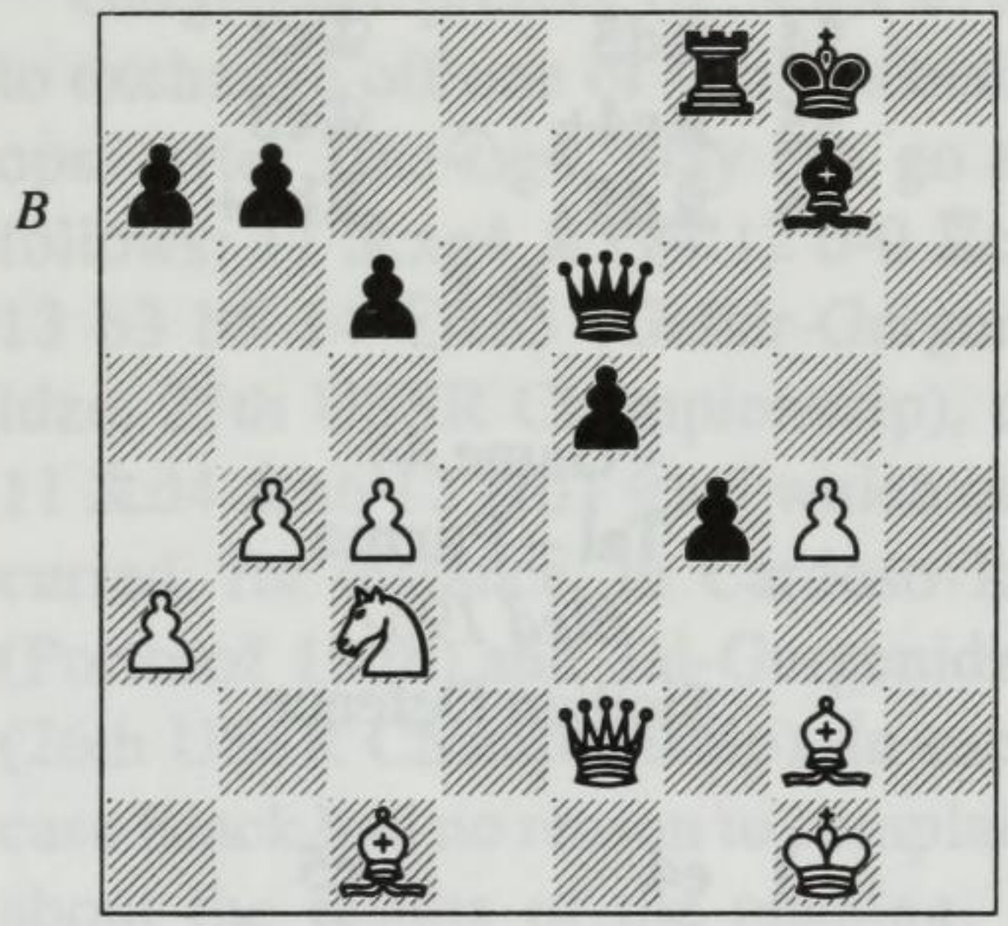
**28 ♖d6**

White goes into the main variation. I must admit that I considered White's best continuation to be 28 ♘e4 ♕g6? 29 ♖d6 ♘h6 30 ♘c5 ♖e8 31 ♗xf4 with a balanced ending.

Afterwards we discovered the response 28...♕h5! 29 ♖d6 ♕h2+ 30 ♔f1 ♗c8 31 fxg4 f3 32 ♗xf3 ♕h3+ 33 ♔f2 (or 33 ♕g2) 33...♗xg4 when White has a terrible position.

**28 ... ♕e7**
**29 ♖xe6 ♕xe6**
**30 fxg4** *(D)*

Nothing is achieved by 30 ♗h3 ♕d6 31 ♗xg4 ♕d4+ 32 ♕f2 ♕xc3 33 ♗e6+ ♔h7 34 ♕h4+ ♗h6 35 ♕e7+ ♔g6.



**30 ... e4**

The activation of the dark-squared bishop puts pressure on White's position.

**31 ♘xe4**

This leads by force to an ending where White is the exchange down. White had two other possibilities: (a) 31 ♗xe4 ♖e8! (definitely not 31...♗xc3 32 ♗d5) and White is still the exchange down; and (b) 31 ♕xe4 ♕f6 32 ♘d1 f3 33 ♗f1 ♕d6 or 33 ♗h3 ♕a1 34 ♕c2 ♕d4+ with a most dangerous attack.

**31 ... ♗d4+**
**32 ♔f1**

If 32 ♔h2 ♕h6+ 33 ♗h3 f3! 34 ♕f1 ♕h7 with irresistible threats.

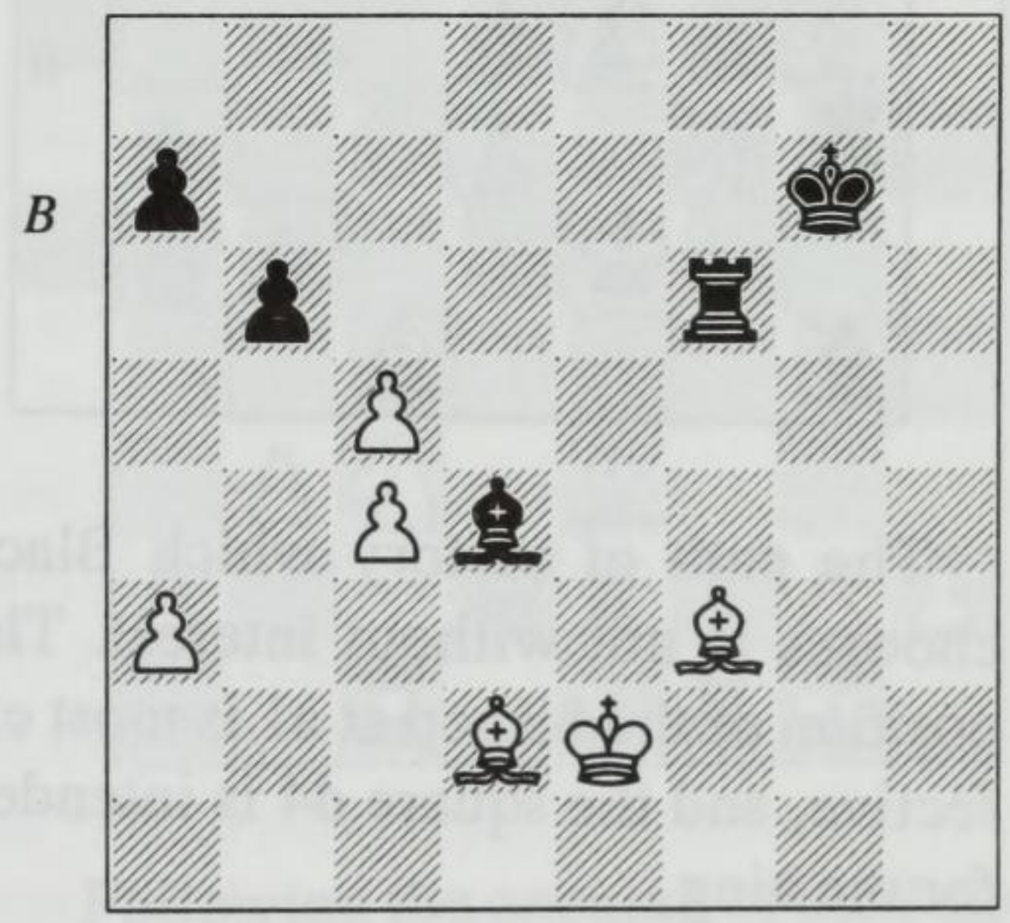
**32 ... f3**

Now play progresses by force.

**33 ♗xf3 ♕xg4**
**34 ♘f6+ ♖xf6**
**35 ♕e8+ ♔h7**
**36 ♕e7+ ♕g7**
**37 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7**
**38 ♔e2**

The whirlwind abates. Its result? Black, admittedly, is the exchange up, but his reduced forces and his opponent's two active bishops will make any exploitation of this superiority difficult. His plan to block the queen's wing is of questionable value. A shift of the king to the centre deserves more attention.

**38 ... b6**
**39 ♗d2 c5**
**40 bxc5?** *(D)*



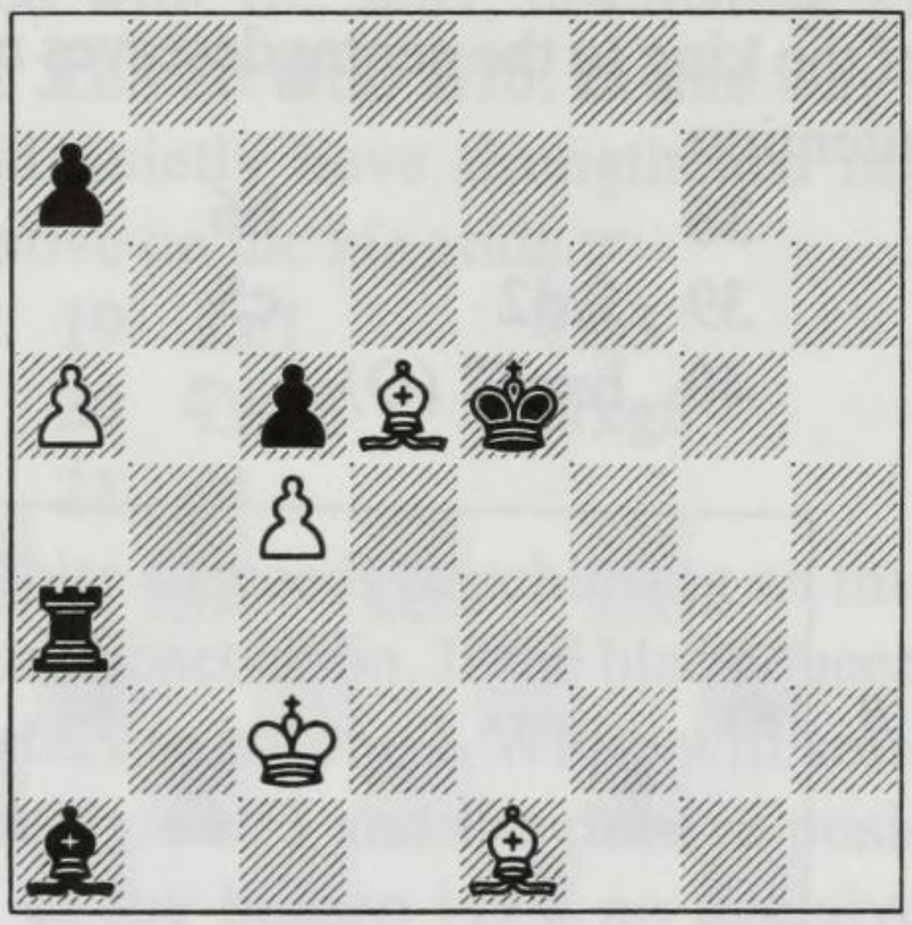
A bad mistake. Now White's inferiority becomes serious. 40 b5 followed

by the advance of the a-pawn should have been played, in which case I do not see how Black could destroy White's fortress. The move made has two faults; Black is left in control of the open b-file and the a-pawn is weakened; now the win is comparatively simple.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **40** | **...** | **bxc5** |
| **41** | **a4** | |

The game was adjourned at this point. It is obvious which move Black sealed.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **41** | **...** | **♖b6** |
| **42** | **♗d5** | **♔f6** |
| **43** | **♔d3** | **♔e5** |
| **44** | **♗e1** | **♖b3+** |
| **45** | **♔c2** | **♖a3** |
| **46** | **a5** | **♗a1!** *(D)* |




The path of victory which Black chooses is not without interest. The position of the bishop at a1 is most effective, and the square d4 is intended for the king.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **47** | **♗f7** | **♔e4** |
| **48** | **♗g6+** | **♔d4** |
| **49** | **♗f7** | **♖a2+** |

White does not manage to chase the king off with ♗f2+.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **50** | **♔b3** | |

An interesting variation would be 50 ♔b1 ♖g2 51 ♗h4 ♔c3 52 ♔xa1 ♔b3 and mate.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **50** | **...** | **♖b2+** |
| **51** | **♔a3** | **♔d3** |
| **52** | **♗g3** | **♖b4** |
| **53** | **♗d6** | **♗d4** |

Having allowed the king to advance, the black bishop again takes up its place on d4.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **54** | **♗d5** | **♔c2** |
| **55** | **♗e4+** | **♔c3** |
| **56** | **♗d5** | **♖b3+** |

**0-1**

## Game 44

### Tal – Parma

*Bled 1961*

Sicilian Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **c5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **♘c6** |
| **3** | **d4** | **cxd4** |
| **4** | **♘xd4** | **g6** |
| **5** | **c4** | |

Usually I play 5 ♘c3 ♗g7 6 ♗e3 ♘f6 7 ♗c4, trying to reach a set-up similar to the Rauzer system. Since this 'visiting card' of mine was well known to the young Yugoslav master, who carefully prepares for every game, I decided to choose another continuation.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **5** | **...** | **♘f6** |
| **6** | **♘c3** | **♘xd4** |
| **7** | **♕xd4** | **d6** |

I once analysed this variation with B. Gurgenidze, during preparations for a student event. The Georgian master used to adopt this continuation regularly, and not without success. The variation has also been thoroughly tested by Yugoslav players, and, in particular, B. Parma is one of the specialists on it.

**8 ♗e2 ♗g7**
**9 ♗e3 0-0**
**10 ♕d2 ♗e6**

Gurgenidze prefers 10...♘g4 so as to exchange off one of White's bishops. After 10...♘g4, play can go as follows: 11 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 12 0-0 ♖c8 13 b3 b5 14 ♘xb5 (Geller-Gurgenidze, 25th USSR Championship), or 11 ♗d4 ♗h6 12 ♕d1 ♘e5 which occurred, for instance, in Cardoso-Tal (Portorož 1958) and Tal-Gurgenidze (26th USSR Championship). In each case Black had no reason to complain about the results of the opening. It would be interesting to test the variation 11 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 12 ♗d4 which, as far as I know, has not yet occurred in serious tournament practice.

With his move 10...♗e6 Black wants to emphasise that the position of the pawn on c4 also has its drawbacks.

**11 ♖c1 ♕a5**
**12 b3**

White is in no hurry to castle, preferring for the moment to strengthen his c-pawn and to keep open the possibility of moving his knight, thus offering to transpose into an ending in which his king will still be in the centre.

**12 ... ♖fc8**

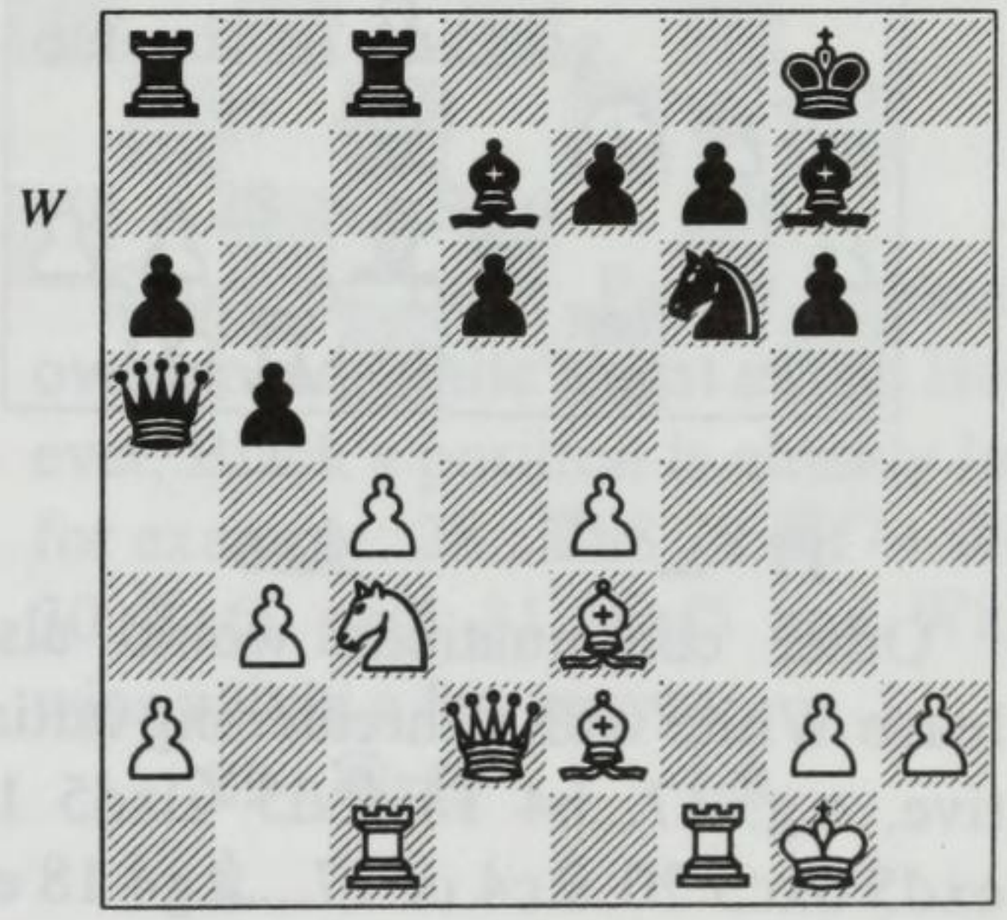
More accurate was 12...a6 and if 13 0-0 then 13...b5.

After the text, however, the situation has changed: Black has used an extra move preparing the advance ...b5 and the absence of the rook has weakened his kingside. Now White's play is directed against the enemy king.

**13 0-0 a6**
**14 f4**

A natural move, and therefore I was astonished to discover that it was practically an innovation. In their games with Parma, Gligorić and Janošević played 14 ♗f3 which I consider to be inconsistent.

**14 ... b5**
**15 f5 ♗d7**
**16 fxg6 hxg6** *(D)*



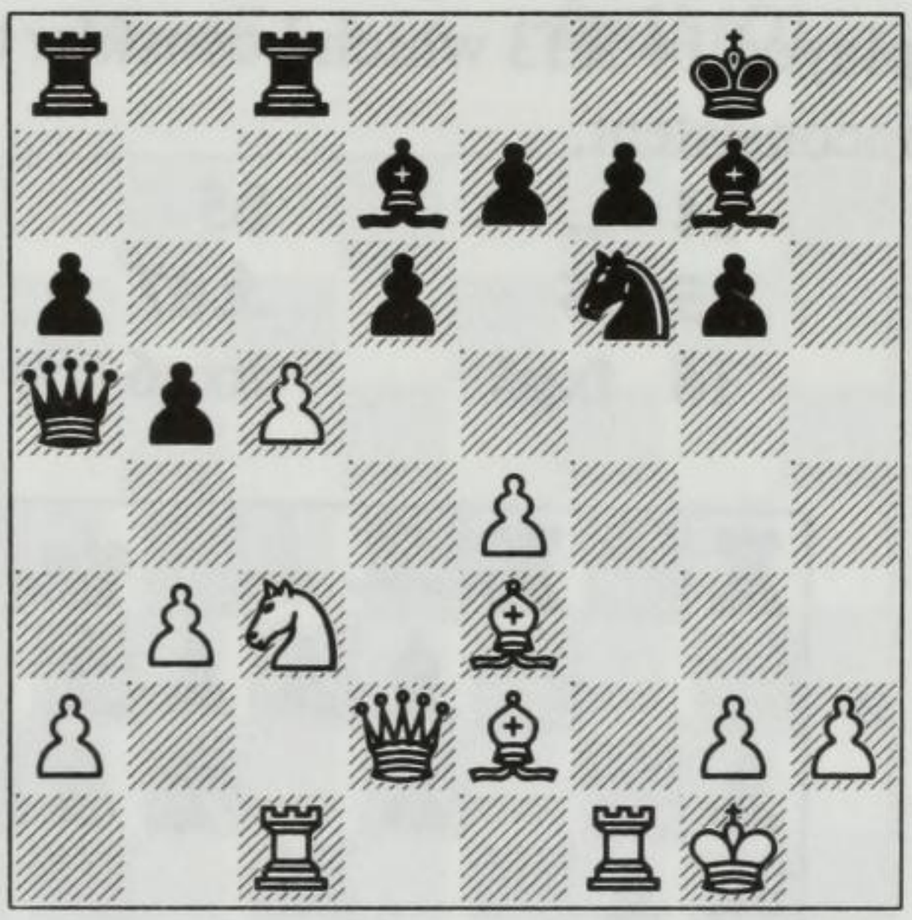

Following the opening of the f-file, it is clear that Black would be better off with his other rook on c8. Here the advance 17 e5 was very tempting.

After thinking for about half an hour, I rejected it because of 17...b4 18 exf6 (18 ♘a4 ♘e4 19 ♕d4 ♗xa4 20 ♕xe4 ♗c6 21 ♕f4 ♕xe5 22 ♕xf7+ ♔h7) 18...bxc3 19 ♖xc3 ♗xf6 20 ♖xf6 exf6 21 ♗d4 ♕g5 22 ♕xg5 fxg5 23 ♗f6 ♖e8, and although White has compensation for the sacrificed exchange, Black has defensive possibilities.

**17 c5** *(D)*

White is stealing up on the black knight. This move has one other significant virtue: Black's queen is not only unable to assist the development of his queenside attack, but is also a long way from his kingside.

*B*



**17 ... ♗e6**

Other continuations would also leave White with a threatening initiative, e.g. 17...b4 18 ♘d5 ♘xd5 19 exd5 dxc5 20 ♗c4 or 17...♗g4 18 e5 dxe5 19 ♖xf6 ♗xe2 20 ♖b6, and the situation of the black queen is tragicomic. In the case of 17...dxc5 18 e5 ♘g4 White was planning to exchange queens by 19 ♘d5 ♕xd2 20 ♗xd2, and Black has a difficult problem in deciding how best to sacrifice the exchange[1].

After the text-move, Black threatens 18...dxc5. White cannot play 18 cxd6 exd6 19 ♗d4 because of the usual combinative blow in such positions – 19...♘xe4! However, he is able, for the moment, to avoid exchanges.

**18 ♗f3 dxc5**

There is nothing better. The passive 18...♖ab8 leads to a difficult position after 19 cxd6 exd6 20 ♗d4.

**19 e5 ♘g4**

He cannot save the exchange. On 19...♖d8 there follows 20 ♕f2 and Black cannot play 20...♘d5.

**20 ♗xa8 ♗xe5** *(D)*

*W*



For the moment Black is a rook down, but both white bishops are attacked and at the same time the h-pawn is threatened. However, it is at

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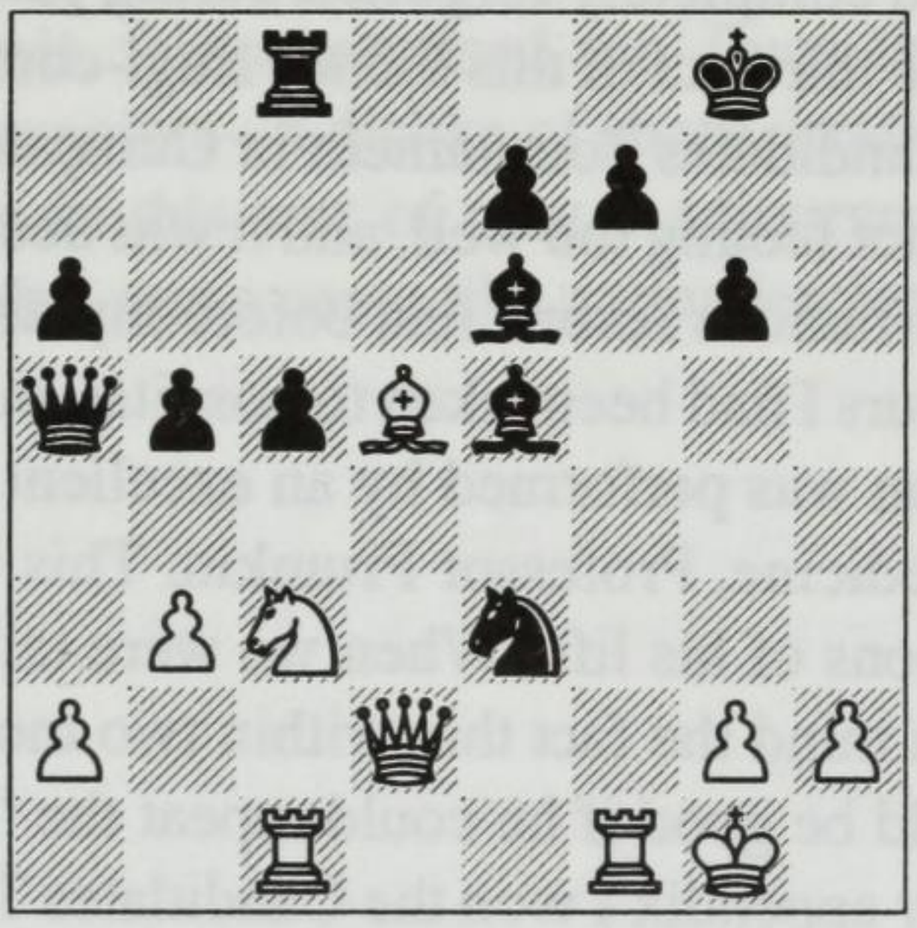
1 It is hard to see why Black is worse after 20...♖e8 21 ♘c7 ♗xe5.

this moment that the weakening of the f7-square by 12...♖fc8 is exposed.

**21 ♗d5 ♘xe3** *(D)*

By 21...♖d8 Black could have set an interesting trap: if White simply counts pieces and 'sacrifices' his queen by 22 ♗xe6 ♖xd2 23 ♗xf7+ ♔h7 24 ♗xd2, then after 24...♕c7 his position becomes very dangerous in view of the threats of 25...♗d4+ and 25...♗xc3.

After 21...♖d8 I was planning 22 ♕e2! ♘xe3 23 ♗xe6 fxe6 24 ♘b1 but even so this was Black's relatively best continuation[1].



**22 ♗xe6 ♖d8**

After 22...♘xf1 White was considering, besides 23 ♖xf1, the amusing variation 23 ♗xf7+ ♔g7! (23...♔xf7 24 ♕d5+) 24 ♕g5 ♗xh2+ 25 ♔xf1 (after 25 ♔h1? Black even wins – 25...♖h8 26 ♕xg6+ ♔f8) 25...♔xf7 26 g3.

**23 ♕f2**

As in the variation mentioned in the note to Black's 21st move, unfavourable for White is 23 ♗xf7+ ♔g7 24 ♕xe3 ♗d4 25 ♕xd4+ cxd4 26 ♘e4 ♕b6 27 ♘g5 d3+ 28 ♔h1 d2 29 ♘e6+ ♔h6 and White does not succeed in setting up a mating net.

**23 ... ♘f5**

Black had placed great hopes on this move. Certainly White's queen is threatened (24...♗d4), and also his two minor pieces, but he has a reply which consolidates his advantage.

**24 ♕e2 ♗d4+**

Black naturally did not care for 24...♗xc3 25 ♗xf5 gxf5 26 ♕xe7.

**25 ♔h1 fxe6**
**26 ♕xe6+ ♔g7**

Threatening 27...♘g3+, but White defends by attacking.

**27 ♘e4 ♕c7**
**28 ♘g5 ♖f8**

Short of time, Parma evidently overlooked White's next move. However, Black's position is already lost, for example: 28...♖h8 29 ♕f7+ ♔h6 30 ♖xf5 gxf5 31 ♕xf5 and White wins within a few moves.

**29 ♕xf5 1-0**

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1 Indeed, after 24...♕c7 White seems to be in quite a lot of trouble. In later notes Tal preferred the alternative line 22 ♖fd1.

# 5 Unwell Again

Immediately after the Individual Championship, the Team Championship Final began in Moscow.

Before this I spent a further day in bed in Baku – once again I was suffering from kidney colic – and then, in Moscow, almost straight from the plane, I sat down to play against Smyslov. It is true that the reserve for our team did everything he could to persuade me to rest, promising to play successfully, but I nevertheless decided not to dishearten my team at the very start of the final, and I played against Smyslov until I felt that I was unable to continue. As a result I drew four games, including, it is true, two fighting ones, against Korchnoi and Petrosian, and lost one. I lost because my opponent Stein, readily and with astonishment, made exactly the winning moves that I had recommended in my notes to some game, and about which I had completely forgotten during play.

Even so, it hardly occurred to me that the third act of this kidney tragi-comedy might occur at, of all possible times, the Candidates Tournament in Curaçao.

After the tournament in Moscow, I was not feeling too well, and it was decided to send me to Marianske Lazne, the world-famous resort. Just before my departure a deterioration set in, and within 24 hours I had been taken to hospital, put on the table, and operated upon. The operation was performed by an excellent surgeon, a veritable grandmaster of world medicine, Professor Frumkin. This was, unfortunately, to be one of the last operations of his life. When we were talking before the operation I asked him to bear in mind the fact that within two months I had to travel to Curaçao, and that it would be good if he could repeat the 'miracle' of 1959, when after the removal of my appendix I won the Candidates Tournament. The professor listened to my request, and operated most carefully, but, alas, history did not repeat itself.

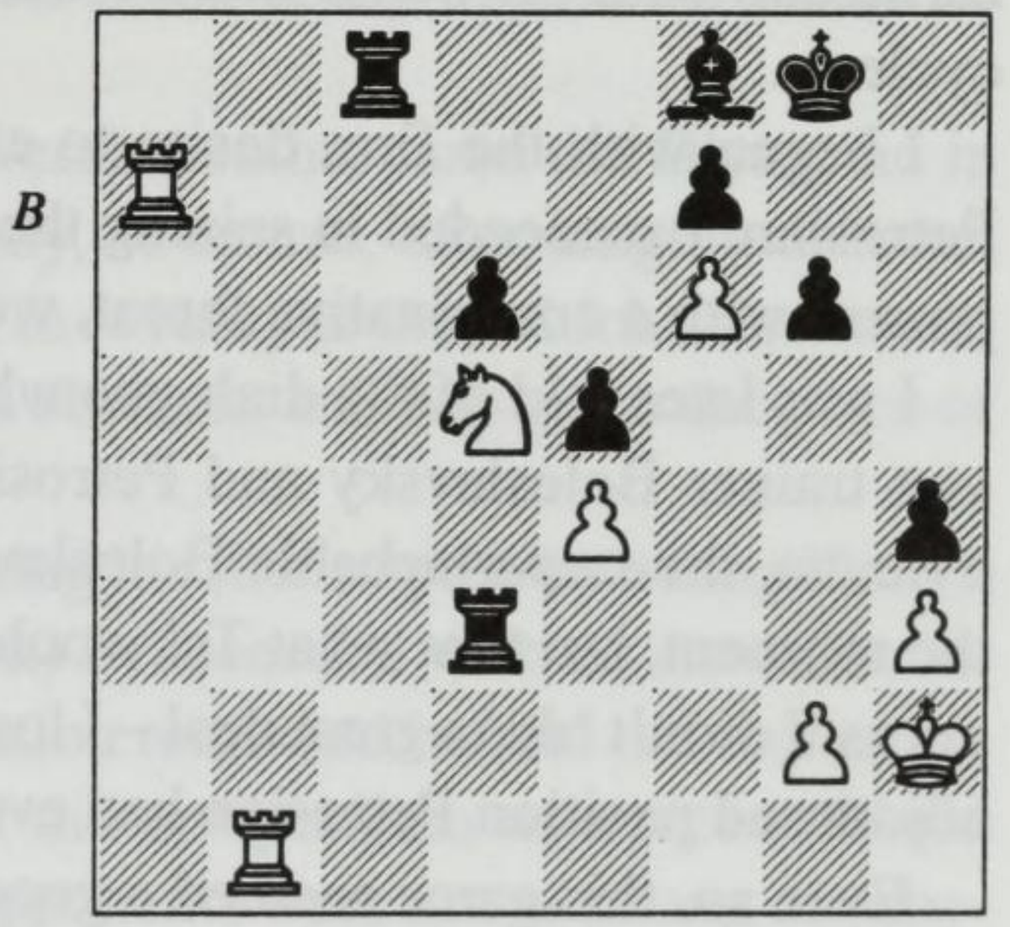
On coming out of hospital, I began my preparations, and I played two training games against Gipslis with a shortened time limit – 40 moves in 1½ hours. I played quite well, and decided that everything was alright. Subsequently, in Curaçao, it became clear that I was only capable of playing for those same first three hours in a competitive game. I only found out about this later, and in the plane, crossing the Atlantic for the first time, I was firmly resolved to obtain once again an audition with Botvinnik.

*JOURNALIST. Did you know how the other contestants rated your prospects?*

CHESS PLAYER. How could I? I read the papers, where your colleagues, from force of habit, rated my chances quite highly, and I agreed with them! Although photographs taken before the flight show that prior to the tournament I looked somewhat emaciated.

The first round in no way warned me, although I adjourned my game against Petrosian in a lost position. The usual first round result, I decided. Then the second game, against Keres, made me suspicious. At first everything went well; I sacrificed my queen and obtained an advantage sufficient to win, but then came the fifth hour of play, that same hour that had always brought me so many dividends in the past. Here, however, I began playing quite terribly. Then in the third round against Benko, in a time-scramble, in which I had so many times swindled the American Grandmaster, I myself was swindled. Nought out of three! It was clear: never in my life had I been in such poor form. For four hours, even four hours and a quarter, everything was normal, but then a reaction took place, I lost my orientation, and gave away points with exceptional generosity.

I gained my first half point in the fourth round against Fischer, which, I must admit, fairly surprised me. Even then the Achilles' Heel of the future World Champion – a dislike of sharp, irrational positions – was known. By embroiling him in this sort of play, I adjourned the game with an advantage, but Black's sealed move came like a thunderclap.



**Tal – Fischer**
*Candidates Tournament, Curaçao 1962*

**41...♖xd5!! 42 exd5 ♗h6,** and Black, by placing his bishop on f4, supporting it with his g-pawn, and giving up his e-pawn by ...e4!, obtained an impregnable position.

Things continued in the same way. I finished the first cycle with 2 points out of 7, alone in last place. However, my natural optimism urged me on, and, with 21

games still to go – a whole tournament! – somewhere in my mind I 'changed my schedule'. Seeing that the competitors at Curaçao were playing more reservedly than in Yugoslavia three years previously, and that the number of points required for first place – I didn't even consider any other! – would be less, I decided to steal up on them.

Then the second round began with me playing what was probably the worst game of my life. As White against Petrosian in a French Defence, somewhere around move 8 I thought for more than an hour, trying to choose between one of two normal continuations, both of which would give White an opening advantage. First I wrote down one move, then the other (incidentally, two rounds later, I adopted the second against Benko, and won, while Spassky played the first against Petrosian a year later, and also won), and, being unable to decide which was the stronger, I suddenly made a third, ridiculous move. By move 13 White already stood worse, and then in addition I immediately blundered away a bishop.

In this cycle I suffered a further three successive defeats, when I declined a draw offered by Fischer, and ruined excellent attacking positions against Filip and Geller, losing to each of them for the first time. Even my first ever win against Korchnoi did not especially cheer me. With one half of the tournament gone, I had moved up one place – to last but one! – with 4½ points. However, the leaders had 'only' 9! I spent the two-week break still hoping to rest and regain my form, and with the belief that I would win almost every game in the 3rd and 4th cycles.

I began with the firm desire to effect an immediate change. Indeed, against Petrosian, I succeeded in seizing the initiative as Black, and, frightening my opponent with a combinative threat, won a pawn.

I was later told of the dialogue which took place at this point between the Soviet trainer Boleslavsky and Petrosian's anxious wife. Replying to Rona Yakovlevna, the imperturbable Boleslavsky remarked that Petrosian stood badly at the moment, but that what Tal would do in the fifth hour of play was anybody's guess. I didn't 'do' a great deal – I lost the greater part of my advantage, and in the adjourned position Petrosian had every chance of a draw.

Even so, this game seemed a good omen to me, but the next one – with Keres – was the last one that I played with any hope of success in the tournament. By success, I repeat, I mean only first place.

I thought up a very interesting combination, and after making a preparatory move, I even went up to Petrosian and joked: 'I'm going for the brilliancy prize'. The point was that, in my preliminary calculations, I was planning to sacrifice my queen for only two minor pieces, but after writing down ♕h5, which would have led to the sacrifice, I instead changed my mind and played ♕f3, forgetting about

Black's obvious reply. Within two moves, not a trace of my attack remained, but I was a pawn down, and soon had to resign.

It was only then that it became clear to me that it was time to give up the tournament as lost. After this I played much more calmly, even imperturbably, and scored four draws – an achievement! – plus a loss to Geller. In this game I had the advantage, but all the time I was disturbed by the question: was it right for me, when in my heart I had given up the fight for first place, to play for a win which would upset the positions of the leaders: Petrosian, Keres and Geller. At the same time it was awkward to offer a draw: after all, Geller could hope for me to blunder in the fifth hour. So, tormented by doubts, I forgot about my clock until I noticed that I had only a few minutes remaining, whereupon I began playing at blitz speed. When the time-scramble was over, it turned out that on the way I could have won White's queen in one move, but in the adjourned position it was Geller who had the advantage.

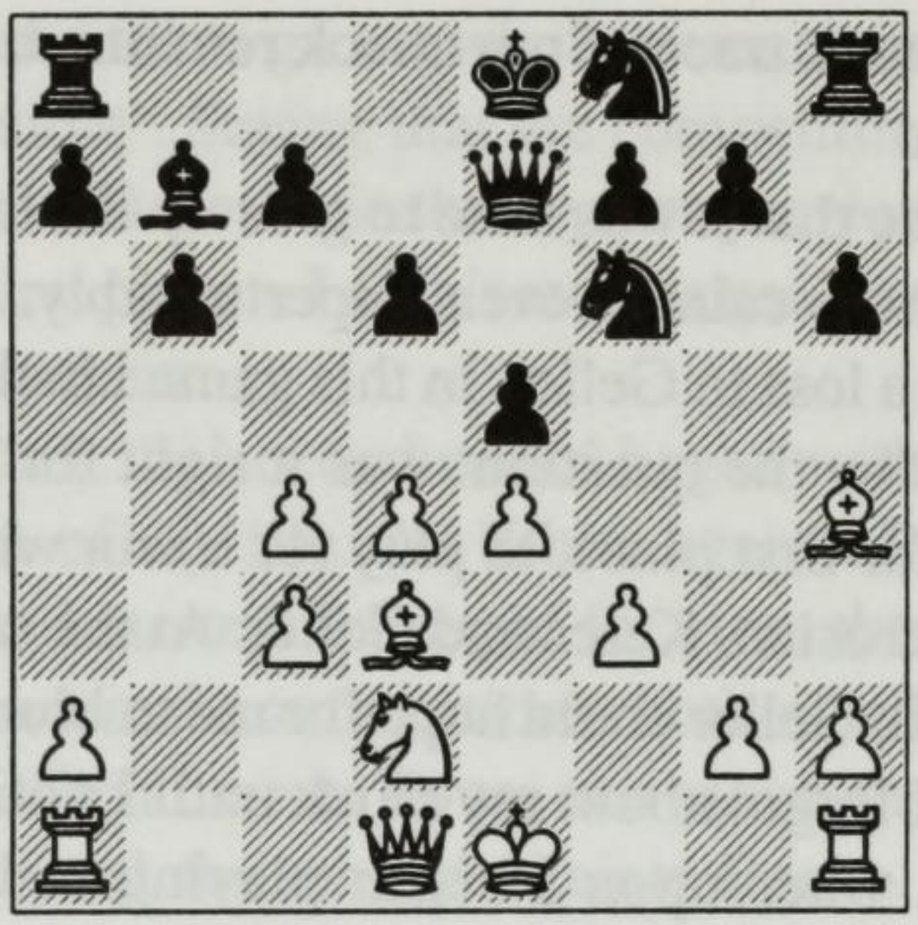
I was intending to play the fourth cycle without any ambition at all, and perhaps it was because of this that I had a recurring attack of my illness. Then another, and another. In short, I went into a local hospital, and there, by the united efforts of the doctors, the other players, the controllers and the leader of our delegation, I was persuaded to stop playing. Although I had never withdrawn from an event through illness since the time of the 4th category tournament and scarlet fever, I did this with a relatively quiet mind: all seven of my opponents would be equally affected by my withdrawal.

After the return home, and a break of several months, came the Olympiad in Varna. I was included in the USSR team only, of course, after lengthy debates, and the medical inspection was 'not inferior' in severity to that which cosmonauts have to undergo. I managed to overcome this obstacle, and was given the place of second reserve.

In my first games I played like a man making his first steps after a long illness, but as early as the third game (with Mohrlok) I succeeded with an attractive attack, in which, unfortunately, the main variation remained behind the scenes.

In this event I played quite well. True, I did not perform as a recent World Champion should (on the fourth board the opponents were not as strong or experienced as those on board one), but well enough to take first place on my board. The following game was unofficially judged to be the most brilliant played in the Olympiad (*see diagram on following page*).

**13 c5! dxc5 14 dxe5 ♕xe5 15 ♕a4+ c6 16 0-0 ♘g6 17 ♘c4 ♕e6 18 e5 b5 19 exf6! bxa4 20 fxg7 ♖g8 21 ♗f5 ♘xh4 22 ♗xe6 ♗a6 23 ♘d6+ ♔e7 24 ♗c4 ♖xg7 25 g3 ♔xd6 26 ♗xa6 ♘f5 27 ♖ab1 f6 28 ♖fd1+ ♔e7 29 ♖e1+ ♔d6 30**




**Tal – Hecht**
*Varna Olympiad 1962*

**♔f2 c4 31 g4 ♘e7 32 ♖b7 ♖ag8 33 ♗xc4 ♘d5 34 ♗xd5 cxd5 35 ♖b4 ♖c8 36 ♖xa4 ♖xc3 37 ♖a6+ ♔c5 38 ♖xf6 h5 39 h3 hxg4 40 hxg4 ♖h7 41 g5 ♖h5 42 ♖f5 ♖c2+ 43 ♔g3 ♔c4 44 ♖ee5 d4 45 g6 ♖h1 46 ♖c5+ ♔d3 47 ♖xc2 ♔xc2 48 ♔f4 ♖g1 49 ♖g5 1-0**

If 49...♖xg5 50 ♔xg5 d3, then 51 g7 d2 52 g8♕ d1♕ 53 ♕b3+.

Nevertheless, for me the most memorable event of the Olympiad was the resumption of the Botvinnik-Fischer game. The question of which team would take first place was already decided, but for this game chess fans gathered from literally all over Bulgaria. Everyone remembered the recent interview given by Fischer, in which he had said that he could beat Botvinnik in a match, and the game therefore held exceptional prestige interest.

My game, against D. Byrne, was also adjourned, in an ending slightly favourable for me, but no-one, myself included, looked at it seriously. Three of us, Boleslavsky, Spassky and I, set up Botvinnik's position in our room, and got down to analysing it. We were not the only ones. When, on the advice of our trainer Boleslavsky, I went off to the family room of Donald and Robert Byrne to offer a draw, I saw on their table the adjourned position of the Botvinnik-Fischer game.

The analysis went on for almost the whole of the night. The three of us worked together, as did Botvinnik, Geller, Keres and Furman on the floor above. From time to time the younger players, Spassky and I, would take turns to go upstairs and exchange conclusions.

Towards five o'clock in the morning, Geller's fantastic idea – to battle with two isolated pawns against two united pawns in a rook ending – had been fully worked out, and we decided that there were considerable drawing chances. And when, for the last time, we set off downstairs to sleep Mikhail Moiseyevich said to us: 'Please, if anyone asks, tell them my position is hopeless!'. We overslept,

and missed breakfast by a long time, but when we arrived in the restaurant we found the Americans there. They looked sleepy, but contented: they were in no doubt that Fischer's position was won.

When we all arrived at the overcrowded tournament hall, we found the following picture: Botvinnik walking calmly up and down the stage, Fischer sitting with his head in his hands, and a theoretically drawn position already on the board.

The Varna Olympiad helped considerably in re-establishing my self-confidence. Otherwise it is difficult to explain my result in the USSR Team Championship, which began immediately afterwards in Leningrad. As always, the opposition on board one was pretty strong, and as usual my games were aggressive, but even so, in the first 7 rounds I scored 7(!!) draws. Then, in the last round, an amusing situation arose. The point was that on the top board, along with Spassky, Keres, Geller, Smyslov and Boleslavsky, there was a candidate master from Moldavia, Shofman. He had seven noughts, I had seven draws, and we had to play each other in the last round. Everyone tried to guess whose tradition would be broken: mine, his, or both together if he should win. I managed to 'change my principle', and Shofman's series continued.

Despite my suddenly acquired reputation as a 'drawing king', I travelled to the Individual Championship of the USSR in Erevan in a good frame of mind, since I felt that with each succeeding month I was approaching my previous form.

In Erevan I started well, and one of my games, the one with Bannik, is given here. I was flattered by the assessment given to this game by Petrosian: 'Even if I don't say who made the combination, it is clear all the same: from far off it smells of Tal!' I was going well: 4 out of 5, 5 out of 6. Then, in quick succession, came defeats at the hands of the experienced masters Mikenas and Aronin. Nevertheless, drawing few games, I was still a contender for first place. This continued until my game with Korchnoi, who was playing splendidly. The pairings had placed Spassky and myself next to each other in the tournament table, and now Korchnoi first defeated Boris with Black, and then me with White, when he boldly and confidently left himself only seconds for his last few moves, but on the other hand had everything weighed up!

This game evidently made such demands on Victor's stamina, that towards the end of the tournament he played much less strongly. I scored 4½ points from my last 5 games, but this was sufficient only to enable me to share 2nd-3rd places with Taimanov, half a point behind Korchnoi. There was some consolation for me (although I did not consider that I had performed badly) in the form of several special prizes, including one for the most interesting game played in the Championship.

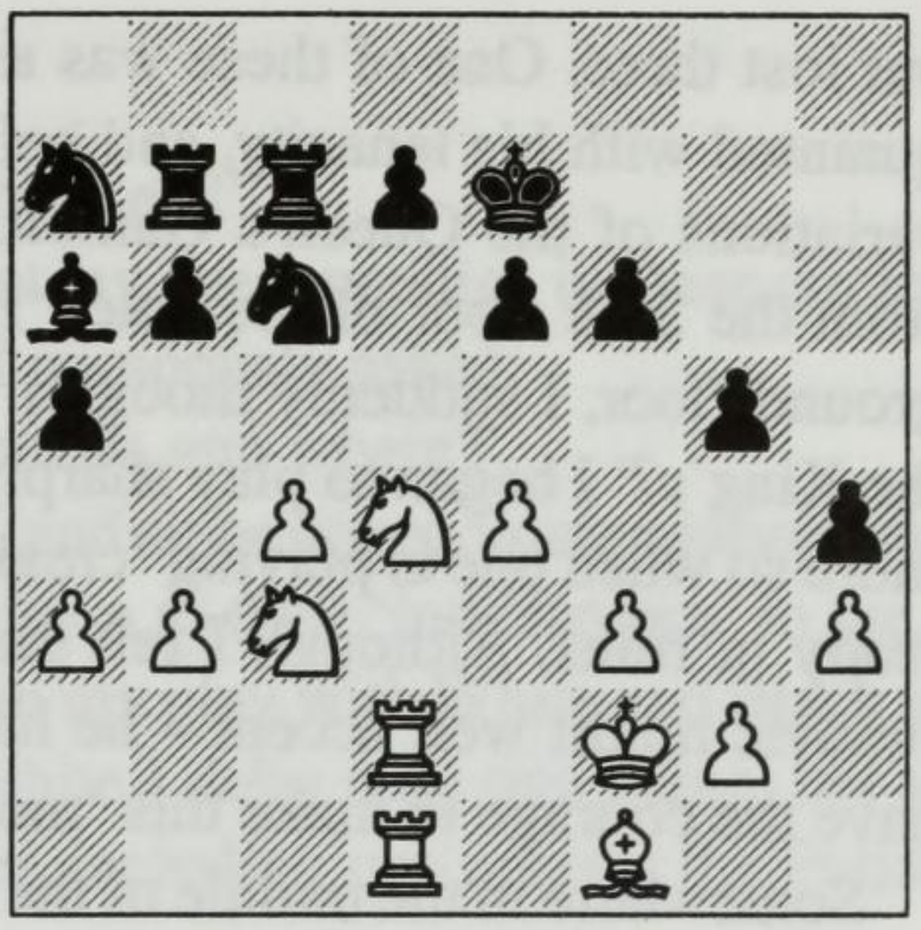
**A. Zaitsev – Tal**
*USSR Ch, Erevan 1962*
Modern Benoni

**1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♗b5+ ♘fd7 9 a4 0-0 10 ♘f3 ♘a6 11 0-0 ♘b4 12 ♗e3 b6 13 ♕e2 ♘f6 14 ♗f2 ♘h5 15 ♗h4 ♕c7 16 ♘e1 f5 17 exf5 ♖xf5 18 g3 ♗b7 19 ♗c4 ♗d4+ 20 ♔h1 ♕f7 21 ♘g2 ♖e8 22 ♕f3 ♘xd5 23 g4 ♖xf4 24 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 25 ♗xd5 ♖e6 26 ♘xf4 ♘xf4 27 ♖xf4 ♕xf4 28 ♗xe6+ ♔g7 29 ♗d5 ♕xg4 30 ♗g3 ♕h5 31 ♗g2 ♗e5 32 ♗xe5+ ♕xe5 33 h3 h5 34 ♖d1 g5 35 ♖d5 ♕e3 36 ♘e4 g4 37 hxg4 hxg4 38 ♘xd6 ♕c1+ 39 ♔h2 ♕f4+ 40 ♔h1 g3 41 ♖d1 ♕h6+ 42 ♔g1 ♕e3+ 43 ♔h1 ♕e2 44 ♘f5+ ♔f6 45 ♖f1 ♕h5+ 46 ♘h4+ ♔e7 47 ♖f4 ♕h8 48 ♗f1 ♕xb2 49 ♘f5+ ♔e6 50 ♘xg3 ♕c1 ½-½**

The New Year, 1963, found me in hospital. An examination had shown that a repeat operation was necessary. It was carried out by a pupil of the late Professor Frumkin, who, according to his teacher, was knowledgeable. The operation took place in Moscow, and on this occasion a thorough job was made of it, since in the first half of the year I had nothing especially important planned in chess. The operation was completed successfully, and after leaving hospital I remained in Moscow, trying my hand for the first time in a new field, as chess correspondent for the paper *Soviet Sport*, during the match for the chess crown between Botvinnik and Petrosian. It was with pleasure that I 'avenged' myself upon my colleagues, discovering in analysis their mistakes. My first experience showed me that the work was difficult, interesting, and beneficial. It also had repercussions of a purely chess nature. Whereas earlier I had played 1 e4 and 1 d4 on the first move with roughly equal frequency, two months of observing the problems of isolated and hanging pawns left me so sated with their taste, that for a long time after this I simply avoided 1 d4.

In the summer, the time came for me myself to play, and I realised that sometimes a lengthy chess starvation can be beneficial. I travelled with Bronstein to Miskolc, where my play was easy and unrestrained, which is apparent if only from the games against Ghitescu and Bilek given in this book.

I practically assured myself of first place some 3-4 rounds before the finish. Then the USSR Peoples' Spartakiad was held once again. My result was more satisfactory than the one three years earlier, but our team only reached the second final group, not the main one, and so for part of the event I was playing against less experienced masters. Nevertheless, several of the games proved to be of interest.




**Mnatsakanian – Tal**
*USSR Spartakiad, Moscow 1963*

The positioning of the black pieces appears dubious, and if White had chosen, say, 39 a4, radically preventing the counterblow ...b5, he could hardly have lost. However, the position 'urged' White to try for more, and he adopted determined measures: **39 c5? ♗xf1 40 cxb6 ♖xb6 41 ♘a4 ♖b5! 42 ♔xf1 ♘xd4 43 ♖xd4 ♘c6**, and Black's pieces had so come to life that White was unable to save the game.

In the diagram position, I had been hoping to lure Mnatsakanian into a quite different combination: 39 ♘d5+ exd5 40 cxd5. Now, in order to avoid the loss of a pawn, Black must play 40...♘b8, and after 41 d6+ ♔xd6 42 ♘c6+ ♔e6 (42...♔xc6 leads to mate) 43 ♖d6+ ♔f7 44 ♘xb8 ♗xf1 45 ♔xf1 he cannot play 45...♖xb8 on account of 46 ♖xd7+. However, the quiet 45...♔e7! would suddenly reveal that White's spectacular combination has led only to his defeat.

In the second half of the year I took greater steps to make up for my previous lack of activity, and took part in a further three tournaments. The first was in Havana. Not without a certain trepidation, caused by memories of Curaçao, I flew across the ocean, but on this occasion my kidneys behaved themselves perfectly. The tournament itself can be put down in my chess biography as one of those in which I was satisfied with the result, but in no way with my play.

The participants were very varied in strength, and if one's game is 'overworked' this is always dangerous. When, in the first round, I failed to win a won pawn(!!) ending against Pachman, and in the second round overcame Jimenez only with difficulty, and not really deservedly, much became clear to me. Nevertheless, taking into account the fact that, in order to win in such a mixed tournament of Grandmasters, masters, candidate masters and even first category players (measuring according to standards familiar to me), a high percentage of points would be required, I tried to take a hold on myself. As a result I drew few games,

but lost three. One of these was as White to Trifunović. I was already well acquainted with his tenacity, and before the game Geller and I selected one of the variations of the Queen's Gambit, but while the high-speed lift was taking us from the 28th floor of the hotel 'Havana Libre', where we were staying, to the ground floor, I suddenly thought: 'Why play the Queen's Gambit when there is the King's?' I began to play sharply, which is always not without its dangers, the more so when one is playing 'creakily'. In short, by move 15 my position was already in ruins. Although I felt that it would be worth offering a draw, for Trifunović might well accept – he had drawn all his games up till then! – I didn't have the courage to make this 'move'. Some ten moves later I resigned.

Somewhere in the middle of the tournament came the important game between Korchnoi and myself. Up till then I had hardly lost to him as Black, and after a very sharp struggle this game also ended in a draw. And for a week, Korchnoi suddenly stopped speaking to me. At the end of the week I lost to the Cuban Calero (it was his only win) in a game where I twice had a completely won position, but twice blundered, on the second occasion losing my queen. After this there was still a draw to be had, but I blundered for the third and last time. The first person who came to console me was Korchnoi. When I enquired as to what had provoked his week-long hostility, he answered in his usual direct way: 'Well, you see, I reckoned up, and decided that I would have to win against you, otherwise you would take first place. No one thought that you would lose to Calero!'

Indeed, finishing with 8½ points out of 9, which included a 90-move win against Geller, I nevertheless ended up half a point behind Korchnoi, as did Geller and Pachman. There was a great contrast between this, the Capablanca Memorial Tournament, and the International Tournament which started immediately after it in the Moscow Central Chess Club. Here my result was roughly equivalent, but I was much more satisfied with my play. I am inclined to think that the prize I received for interesting play was more or less deserved. The reader can find two of the games, against Gligorić and Padevsky, in this book.

An amusing episode accompanied the start of this tournament. The day before, on the birthday of one of my friends, by no means a chess player, someone suddenly expressed the desire that in my game with the Dutchman Kuijpers the following day I should sacrifice something. 'Which piece, and on which square would you like?', I asked jokingly. 'Well, let's say a knight on e6.'

The following day I had naturally forgotten this conversation, and my game with Kuijpers first proceeded quietly, and then became more complicated in the time-scramble. I made a move, and with time-trouble over, Kuijpers realised that mate was inevitable, and resigned. In the foyer my delighted friends gathered round.

'Good man! Did you do it on purpose?'

'Do what?'

'Well, make that last move with your knight to e6?'

I immediately remembered, and realised that my chess prestige in these circles had risen sharply, and so as to maintain this, I pompously asked:

'What would you like me to sacrifice tomorrow, and where?'

For a moment my friends were taken aback, and since no recommendation was given, my draw in the second round was put down to their 'indifference' to me.

I would also like to mention the difference in my play with White and Black in this tournament, rather unusual for me. As White I drew only one game, but as Black I lost one game and drew the remainder, including one against the Polish player Balcerowski who finished last.

Two of the other encounters are also worth recalling: those with Smyslov and Liberzon. During the first stage of our chess 'relationship', when playing against Vasily Vasilyevich, I was terribly afraid of transposing into an endgame. Here as Black I calmly went into an ending, and one that was somewhat inferior. Up to a certain point Smyslov played brilliantly, and achieved a great deal, and in desperation I gave up the exchange without gaining the slightest compensation. Then Smyslov decided to convert his advantage into a win without giving me the slightest counter-chance, and began playing somewhat listlessly, whereupon my king penetrated into the white position onto the square e3. At the time of the sealed move, I was even of the opinion that Black's chances were by no means worse. This was not shaken even by the radio report, which said that Smyslov was the exchange ahead, and had a winning position.

JOURNALIST. *Who was the commentator?*

CHESS PLAYER. Not you, not you, don't get alarmed.

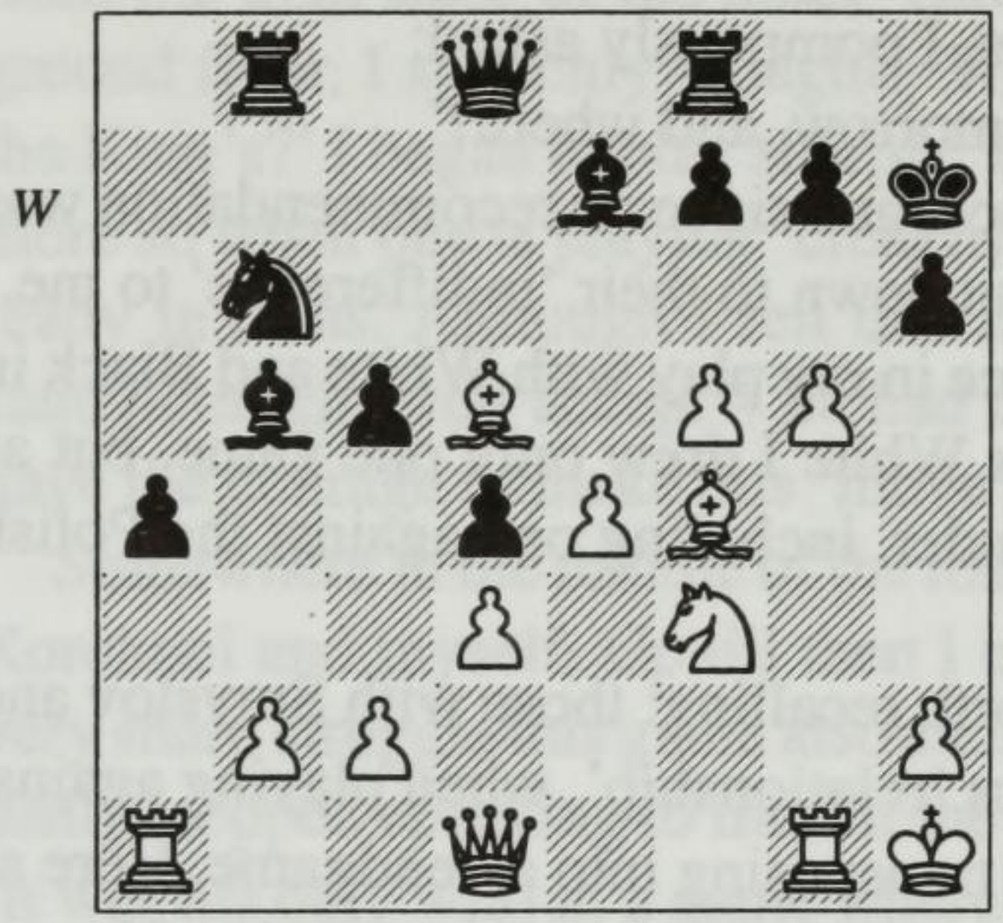
Evidently Smyslov did not believe the radio assessment of the position either, for the day before the resumption he offered a draw .

My one nought in the table came in my game against Liberzon, when – and this happens to me – in an equal and quiet ending with opposite-coloured bishops I simply lost patience. We were playing in the small room of the Central Chess Club, from where it was easy to go up to the spectators, and Liberzon, after making a move, immediately went over to his family who were in the hall, and began talking in very lively style with them about something. This suddenly infuriated me, and in quite ridiculous fashion I began playing for a win, which, as is well known, is almost always equivalent to playing for a loss.

My third individual tournament in a row was the Championship of Moscow University in lightning chess, in which some of our guests, participants in the

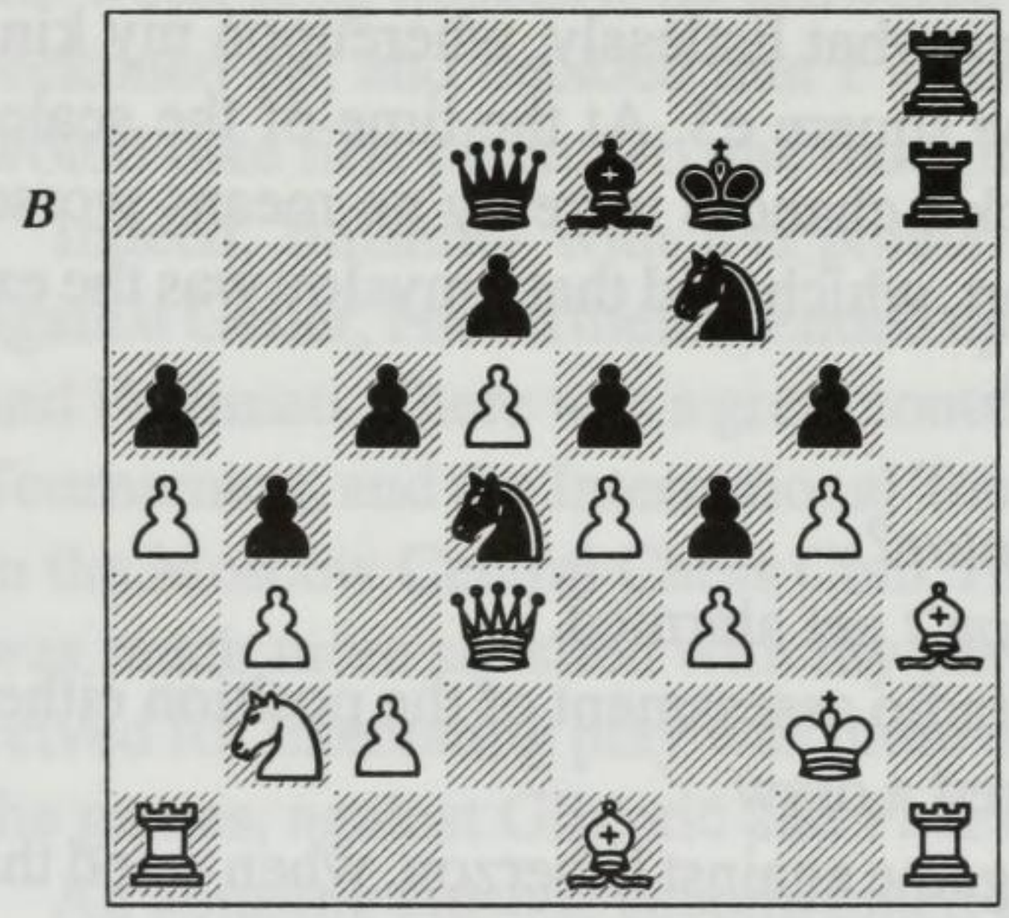
Central Chess Club Tournament, took part. Of the 19 games I lost one, drew none, and came ahead of Kholmov (who took second place) by 2½ points.

Here are a couple of extracts:




**Tal – Suteyev**
*Moscow Blitz, 1963*

**21 ♗xf7 ♗c6 22 g6+ ♔h8 23 ♘xd4! cxd4 24 ♕h5 ♖xf7 25 ♗xh6! ♖xf5 26 ♗g5+ 1-0**




**Bitman – Tal**
*Moscow Blitz, 1963*

**30...♘xg4! 31 fxg4 ♖xh3! 32 ♖xh3 ♕xg4+ 33 ♔h2 ♖xh3+ 34 ♕xh3 ♘f3+ 35 ♕xf3 ♕xf3 36 ♘c4 g4 0-1**

For me the year 1964 was to be sated with chess. I started it, and spent the whole of it, sitting at the chessboard. It was in a 'new country' for me, England, that I saw the New Year in, at the ancient International Tournament held in Hastings.

Here everything reminded one of chess and non-chess battles. William the

Conqueror, the victory of Harry Nelson Pillsbury in the famous tournament of 1895. How much I was to read about all this!

The tournament went well for me, although in view of the short distance (at that time the Hastings Tournament always comprised five English players and five foreigners) I was rather afraid of a recurrence of my old illness – a loss in the first round. Just imagine trying to catch up after such a slip!

The contenders for first place were the old hand of the tournament: the Yugoslav Grandmaster Svetozar Gligorić, and its debutante myself. Neither of us was defeated, but I won one game more. Hastings took a leaf, as it were, out of Havana: there was nothing to boast about regarding my play. An exception should perhaps be made of my game with Gligorić, in which a place was found for an attack, a counter-attack, a combination and a counter-combination.

Apart from myself and the master Khasin, the Soviet Chess Federation also sent the young Lady World Champion, Nona Gaprindashvili, to Hastings to play in a secondary tournament. At that time she was still a first-year student of English. She was, of course, the centre of general attention, but we helped her to overcome her embarrassment, and in addition A. Khasin, a professional teacher of English, would reply to the endless questions from journalists. I recall the question which Nona was asked particularly often: 'What do you think of English men?' At first Nona used to answer with embarrassment, and not altogether tactfully: 'Not much, thank you!' Then one day she called me over, and asked me: 'Misha, it's awkward for me; say that I like them, but that I like Georgian men better!'

Directly from England, Nona and I set off for Iceland. Gligorić also arrived, the Icelandic Grandmaster Olafsson was included, together with a number of other players, and we all played in one tournament: 13 men and one girl.

Here the Gligorić-Tal race began. The result was that I scored 12½ out of 13, and Gligorić a point less.

Three rounds before the finish, the interval was only half a point. Gligorić lost to me, winning his remaining games, while I had somewhere played a draw. On this day a telegram arrived from Moscow, saying that Nona had been awarded the title of Honoured Master of Sport of the USSR, and as a senior colleague I arranged a small banquet, to which a number of the competitors were invited.

The following day I was due to play Nona. I didn't think that at that moment I had the right to play for a win, and so I said to the Lady Champion that I was not averse to agreeing a draw. To my surprise, Nona displayed her character, and said that, in view of the close battle for first place, I was obliged to play only for a win. Then I suggested to her that she should name an opening which she would like me to play, she agreed to this and, naturally without any additional preparation, I sat

down at the board. I now felt more confident, and even had the right to think of revenge. The point was that a New Year lightning tournament had been held in Hastings, and in the final of this Nona had scored 3 out of 3, and I only 2.

I gained my revenge in Reykjavik, and in the course of play I was once more made aware of the Georgian lady's champion-like character. Already a pawn down, Nona got into time-trouble, but when, not wishing to win on time, I 'forgot' to press my clock on a couple of occasions, Nona said to me in a hissing whisper:

'If you do that again, I'll resign straight away!'

Then, in the penultimate round, I won my most interesting game of the tournament against Olafsson, Gligorić drew, and the question of first place was decided.

Then, after a six-year interval, I once again took part in an Interzonal Tournament. Once again the battle was to finish in the first six, and to come ahead of at least two compatriots: of the five Soviet Grandmasters, the door to the Candidates cycle was to be opened to only three.

In addition, there was the not-exactly-clever rule of the forced draw[1], and it was very important at which stage of the tournament a player would encounter the 'Russian row'. For Larsen, for instance, it occurred at the finish, when he had already assured himself of a place in the first six, and therefore he was able to play calmly. Gligorić was less fortunate: he played against the Soviet Grandmasters earlier and, after dropping several points, became nervous. For us too, it was not very pleasant to have to play one difficult game after another without a break.

My game in the second round with Portisch gave me a number of difficult moments, and later even became tragi-comic. Having decided that the most important thing was to play the opening originally, I fully succeeded in my intention but then had to sacrifice to maintain the fire. Portisch captured my pieces, and I, with nothing to lose, broke up his king's position by the advance of my rook's pawn. At some point Portisch could have allowed me to win his queen, gaining for it almost a complete set of the other pieces, but he did not want this, and in a severe time-scramble we repeated the position.

When the draw had been agreed, Portisch somewhat perplexedly asked me whether he could have played better. I just waved my hands.

Later, when he had cooled down after the game, Portisch admitted that he had been expecting my capitulation at any moment, and the fact that I did not resign had put the normally calm Hungarian Grandmaster out of his stride.

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1 Players from one country were given pairing numbers so that they played each other as early as possible in the tournament. This meant that these players had consecutive numbers in the draw, and consequently the remaining players often had to play (say) five or six Soviet Grandmasters in succession. – *Editor's Note*.

This game did me a good practical service. A year later we met in the Candidates Matches, and it was our game from the Interzonal that showed me, firstly, that Portisch was somewhat afraid of me, and, secondly, that such play could confuse my erudite, experienced and formidable opponent.

To return to the Interzonal, after five draws at the start against the Soviet Grandmasters and Portisch, I managed to win several games, and finished the tournament in 1st-4th places. I thus became one of the Candidates, but was not especially pleased with the 'Battle of Amsterdam'.

JOURNALIST. *Is your play affected when you have to set yourself a goal in an event?*

CHESS PLAYER. More likely it is affected by a different sort of stimulus. Perhaps if I had lost one of the games where I had a very dubious position, to Portisch, Foguelman or Gligorić, everything would have turned out differently. As it was, my results in the tournament table had a rather grey appearance. With those who finished in the upper half, I drew, while the 'tail' was 'cut off'. One of the more or less interesting games, with Evans, is given here.

Besides this, I was given great pleasure by the first game in my life with the veteran S. Reshevsky. Prior to this, I had read that the American Grandmaster did not devote a great deal of attention to the opening, and that in his youth he had been very formidable in time-scrambles. Now, on the strength of my own experience, I became convinced of the 100% accuracy of this characterisation. This was one of the few games where I succeeded in catching my opponent in a prepared variation, which, strange as it may seem, is contrary to my normal way of playing. It is one thing, when you yourself are playing from the first few minutes, and something quite different when the game begins at about move 20, as it did against Reshevsky. Everyone reckoned that the end was in sight, for my positional advantage was considerable, and the difference in time simply colossal. On these 20 moves I had spent about 10 minutes, which was necessary for the purely technical operations of writing down the move, moving the piece, and pressing the clock, while Reshevsky had only 15 minutes left! Taking all this into account, I was physically unable to force myself to deal the finishing blow with the necessary energy. I began playing from inertia, as it were, whereas time after time Reshevsky would discover exceptional defensive resources. Then I sacrificed a piece, whereupon the game became tactical, and I was greatly impressed by the way that Reshevsky, with 1-2 minutes for 10 moves, would hold his hand over the board and quite impulsively grasp the very piece that was required, and make with it the only saving move. Finally, in a more or less equal position, Reshevsky offered me a draw. I had also read that he would do this when he was in a bad

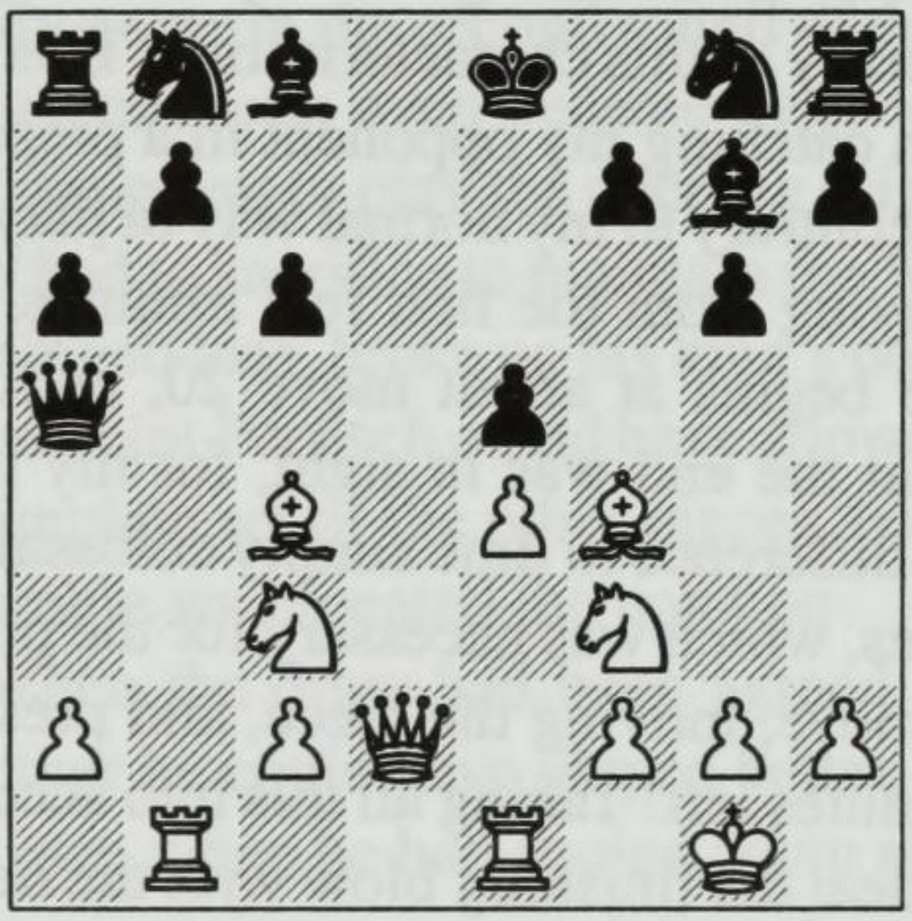
position, and I searched very carefully for what Reshevsky might be afraid of. I found nothing, agreed to a draw, and then the American Grandmaster revealed that it wasn't the position on the board that he was afraid of, but the opponent – at any rate, during this game.

Taking into account the specific nature of the tournament, the position before the 22nd and penultimate round remained tense: at least four of the five Soviet Grandmasters had real chances of success. Someone had to be the 'superfluous fourth', and it was Leonid Stein who stumbled. For the second time running he did not reach the Candidates because of the discrimination, although he took a place which was sufficient for any non-Soviet player. In the last round, the Bulgarian Grandmaster Tringov literally forced me, with his risky play, to carry out a combination with a sacrifice of two pieces, although at this moment there was no real need to take any risks.

**Tal – Tringov**
*Amsterdam Interzonal, 1964*
Modern Defence

**1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♘c3 d6 4 ♘f3 c6 5 ♗g5 ♕b6 6 ♕d2 ♕xb2 7 ♖b1 ♕a3 8 ♗c4 ♕a5 9 0-0 e6? 10 ♖fe1 a6? 11 ♗f4 e5 12 dxe5 dxe5** *(D)*

W



**13 ♕d6! ♕xc3 14 ♖ed1 ♘d7 15 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 16 ♘g5+ ♔e8 17 ♕e6+ 1-0** in view of the mate in two moves.

As a result, the Soviet players who reached the Candidates event were Spassky, Smyslov and myself: we shared first to fourth places with Larsen.

Two weeks later I set off for Kislovodsk with the most unlucky player from the Interzonal Tournament, L. Stein, to play 'non-elimination' chess in the traditional

tournament of the USSR Central Chess Club. I expected that Stein would attempt to exact moral revenge and the battle was indeed pretty sharp, and ... amusing.

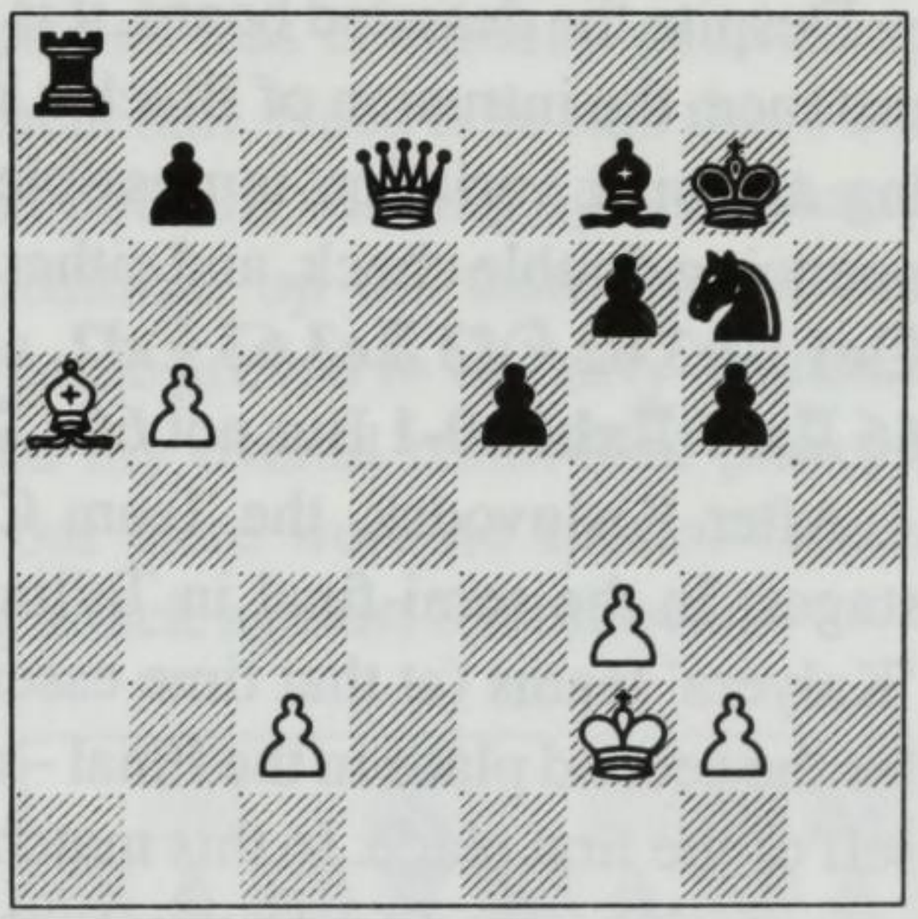
In one of the early rounds I succeeded in playing what was perhaps the most interesting game in the tournament, exacting revenge against Liberzon for my defeat the previous year.

**Tal – Liberzon**

*Kislovodsk, 1964*

Sicilian Defence

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e6 6 ♘db5 ♗b4 7 a3 ♗xc3+ 8 ♘xc3 d5 9 exd5 ♘xd5 10 ♗d2 0-0 11 ♕h5! ♘xc3 12 ♗xc3 e5 13 ♗d3 g6 14 ♕h6 ♕f6 15 0-0!** But not 15 0-0-0 ♗f5! **15...♕g7 16 ♕e3!** Threatening 17 f4. **16...g5 17 h4 h6 18 hxg5 hxg5 19 f3 ♗e6 20 ♔f2 ♘d4 21 ♖ae1** Preventing the blocking of the b1-h7 diagonal. **21...♘c6 22 ♖h1** Transposing into an ending a pawn up by 22 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 23 ♕xe5 ♖ae8 24 ♖h1 seemed insufficient to me. **22...f6 23 ♖h7 ♕xh7 24 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 25 ♕d3+ ♔g7 26 ♖h1 ♖h8 27 ♖xh8 ♖xh8 28 ♕d6 ♖e8 29 b4 a6 30 a4 ♔f7 31 ♕d3 ♔g7 32 b5 ♖d8 33 ♕e4 ♗d5 34 ♕g4 axb5 35 axb5 ♘e7 36 ♗b4 ♘g6 37 ♗a5 ♖a8 38 ♕d7+ ♗f7** *(D)*

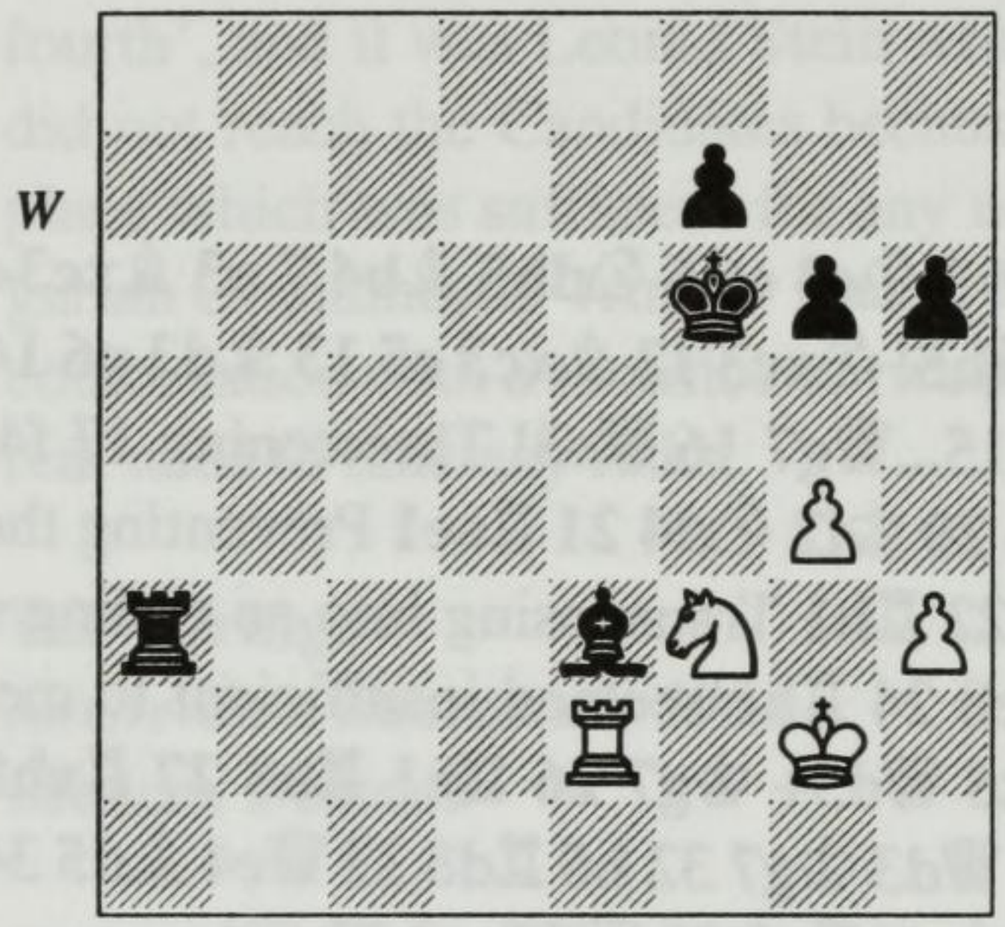



**39 ♗d8** The point of White's plan: f6 has been selected as the target. **39...♘f4 40 ♔g1 ♖a2 41 ♕f5 ♘d5 42 c4 ♖a8** If 42...♖xg2+, then 43 ♔h1. **43 ♕d7 ♘f4 44 ♕e7 ♖a1+ 45 ♔h2 ♖a2 46 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 47 ♕xg5+ ♗g6 48 ♕xe5 ♖xg2+ 49 ♔h1 ♖d2 50 ♕xf4 ♖xd8 51 ♕c7 1-0**

Stein and I went into the lead, but almost all the time Grandmaster Averbakh kept level with us. After 6 rounds we all had 4½ points, and then I once again

showed that I am unable to take first place without any adventures. In the eighth round I lost to the oldest participant, the Hungarian master Kluger, and since there were only three rounds to go before the finish, they began congratulating Stein. However, in the next round he lost, while I managed to win all three games, including the decisive one against Fuchs, which is given here.

The resumption prior to the last round also sticks in my mind.



**Khasin – Tal**
*Kislovodsk, 1964*

Despite the deserted board, it is not easy to find a defence for White. In the first instance, the intrusion of Black's king is threatened, while on 61 ♔g3 the following amusing variation is possible: 61...♔e6! 62 ♘d4+ ♔d5 63 ♘c2 ♗f4, announcing double check, and either mating or winning the h-pawn. White chose **61 ♘e1 ♖b3 62 ♘f3 ♖c3 63 ♘d2**, and lost: **63...♗xd2 64 ♖xd2 ♔g5 65 ♖f2 ♔h4 66 ♖xf7 ♖xh3! 0-1** But not 66...♖g3+ 67 ♔f2 ♖xh3 68 ♖f6!

After Kislovodsk, the Team Championship of the country was held in two stages. In the semi-final in Tallinn, old friends and rivals of the 'Daugava' and 'Kalyera' teams (at that time essentially the teams of Latvia and Estonia) battled for the second place in the Final – already the 'Spartak' team had safely assured itself of the first place. In this match of rivals, I defeated Keres, the 'Daugava' team won, and we went forward into the Final which was held in Moscow.

This took place not long before the Olympiad in Tel-Aviv. Upset by the fact that on this occasion I had not been included in the Soviet team, I was angry with the 'whole world', and was burning with a desire to 'gain revenge'.

Perhaps it was for this reason that I played so energetically, and I even consider that the game against Smyslov given here is one of my best ever games. It is not very often that one sacrifices a queen for a rook, in order to reach a better ending!

In the last round, I played for the first time against Botvinnik under semi-tournament conditions, as it were: previously we had only met in matches! Once

again the Caro-Kann Defence appeared, Black defended excellently, and after the draw had been agreed, Botvinnik and I shared first place on our board.

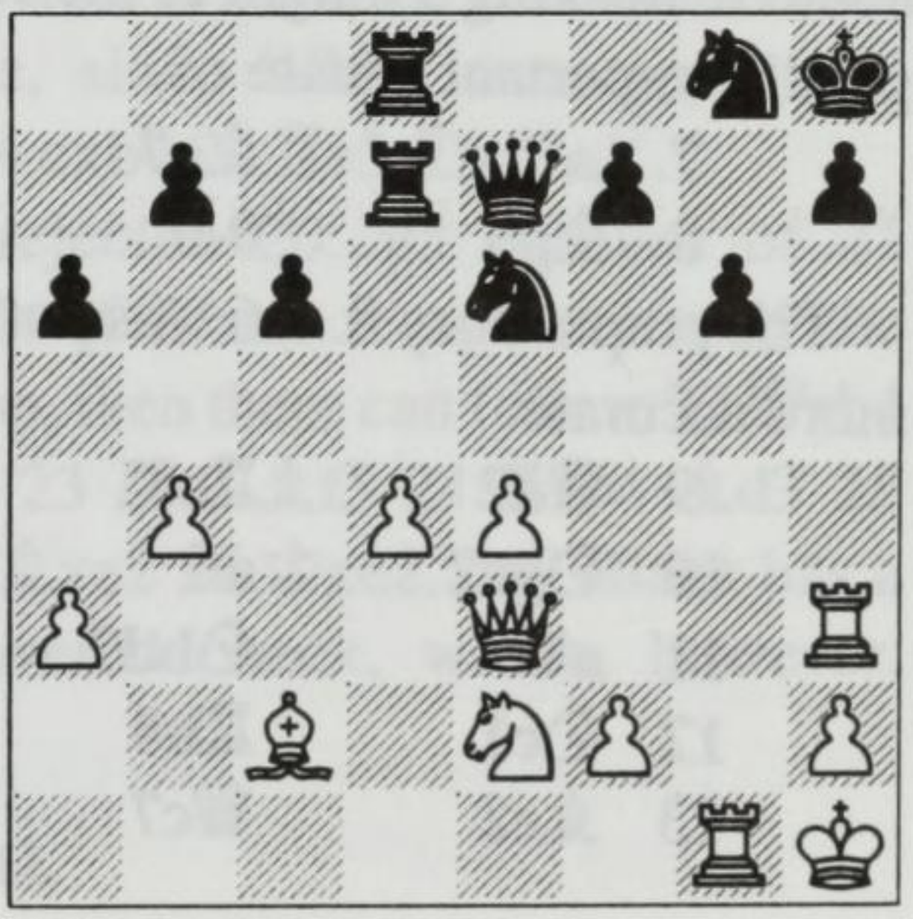
The year ended for me in Kiev, where I participated in the USSR Championship. Here, unfortunately, I caught a cold, which made itself felt. In the first round it was by no means because of this that I lost to Bronstein, in a game from which I gained enormous pleasure. The manoeuvre of Black's king from e8 to f6 simply staggered me.

After this failure at the start, followed by a few draws, I reached the 50% level by winning against Vasiukov. In this game, I spent 40 minutes on my 19th move 'dragging the hippopotamus out of the marsh', which I have talked about earlier.

In the next round I was once again down to '-1', then two rounds later up to '+1', and after the 9th round I fell ill. The day before, I had adjourned my game against Korchnoi, and on subsequent resumption a drawn position was reached: rook and pawn against bishop and pawn. Since it was Korchnoi who had the rook, we carried on playing. On and on we played, and just when I could have saved the half point practically as I pleased, he nevertheless 'outplayed' me: I chose for my bishop almost the only losing square, and there arose a new theoretical position, but this time with a different assessment.

Under the doctor's instructions, I played several of the games in my hotel room. The majority of my opponents readily agreed to this, realising that it was not I who was being capricious, but others proved less compliant, and insisted that play should take place only in the tournament hall. Need it be said that I doubled my efforts in these games, and won them both. In winning against Shamkovich, I seriously spoiled his tournament position: up till then he had been amongst the leaders. With Sakharov also, the game proved to be fairly 'ruthless'.

The majority of the commentators assessed my overall result (3rd place) as quite good, taking into account my illness, but there were no special creative achievements. I will give only the concluding attack against Shamkovich.




**Tal – Shamkovich**
*USSR Ch, Kiev 1964*

**32 ♖d1 ♔g7** 32...♘g7 is somewhat better. **33 f4! ♘c7 34 f5 f6** There is already no salvation, since on 34...gxf5 there comes the decisive 35 ♖g1+ ♔h8 36 e5! ♘d5 37 ♖xh7+! ♔xh7 38 ♕h3+ ♘h6 39 ♗xf5+, mating. **35 fxg6 hxg6 36 ♖g1 ♘e6 37 e5 ♘f8 38 ♗xg6 ♘xg6 39 ♘f4 ♕f7 40 e6 ♖e7 41 exf7 ♖xe3 42 fxg8♕+ 1-0**

## Game 45

### Franco – Tal

*Varna Olympiad 1962*

Modern Benoni Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **d4** | **♘f6** |
| **2** | **c4** | **c5** |
| **3** | **d5** | **e6** |
| **4** | **♘c3** | **exd5** |
| **5** | **cxd5** | **d6** |
| **6** | **e4** | **g6** |
| **7** | **f3** | |

A rarely adopted but, in my opinion, perfectly playable system. Since Black's plans in this variation often involve attacking the pawn on e4, White defends it in good time. If, in addition, he succeeds in preventing the advance ...b5, then Black will evidently be forced to conduct a passive defence. The drawback to White's seventh move is that now he will find it difficult to manoeuvre his king's knight to the strategically important square c4.

**7 ... ♗g7**

**8 ♗g5 0-0**

The preparatory 8...h6 was possibly more accurate.

**9 ♕d2 ♖e8**

**10 ♘ge2 a6**

**11 a4 ♘bd7**

**12 ♘c1 ♖b8**

**13 ♗e2 ♕c7**

The immediate 13...♕a5 did not appeal to me due to 14 ♖a3! preventing ...b5, but now Black threatens ...c4, after which the c1-knight is out of play.

**14 ♘b3**

So as to answer 14...c4 with 15 ♘d4, when it is unlikely that the advance ...b5 can be effected. If White succeeds in completing his development by castling, then the black pieces will be very cramped. Counterplay must be created quickly.

**14 ... ♕b6**

**15 ♖a3**

The attempt to trap the queen by 15 a5 ♕xb3 16 ♗d1 ♕b4 17 ♖a4 runs into a counter-combination: 17...♘xe4 18 fxe4 ♗xc3 19 bxc3 ♖xe4+ 20 ♔f2 ♕b1.

**15 ... ♘e5**

**16 a5**

There was no point in playing this move so soon. Now after ...b5 White will have the weak black a-pawn as compensation for the opening of the b-file, but without the move 16 a5 Black could have freed himself only at the cost of a pawn.

**16 ... ♕b4**

To be honest, it was not easy to decide on this move. The queen takes up a very active position, but she only needs to be disturbed...

Evidently the queen sortie came as a surprise to my opponent, since here he thought for a long time. How is White to get rid of this uninvited guest? The immediate 17 ♖a4 ♕xb3 18 ♗d1 loses to 18...♕xb2! There is the move 17 ♕c2, but I could answer this both with the prosaic 17...c4, and also by 17...♘xd5 18 ♖a4 (18 exd5 ♗f5) 18...♘xf3+! 19 ♔f2 ♘xg5, with more than sufficient compensation for the queen.

Perhaps the strongest continuation for White was the simple 17 0-0, maintaining all the threats. In this case I was proposing to continue 17...b6 (bad is 17...♘c4 18 ♕c2 or 18 ♗xc4 ♕xc4 19 ♗f4), whereupon in the case of 18 axb6 ♕xb6 the black queen slips away, while after 18 ♖a4 ♕xb3 19 ♖a3 ♘c4 20 ♖xb3 ♘xd2 21 ♗xd2 Black's pawn 'goes past the stop', and with 21...b5 he gets an excellent game. White was evidently tired of fighting against temptation, and therefore he chose an ultra-quiet continuation.

**17 ♘a4**

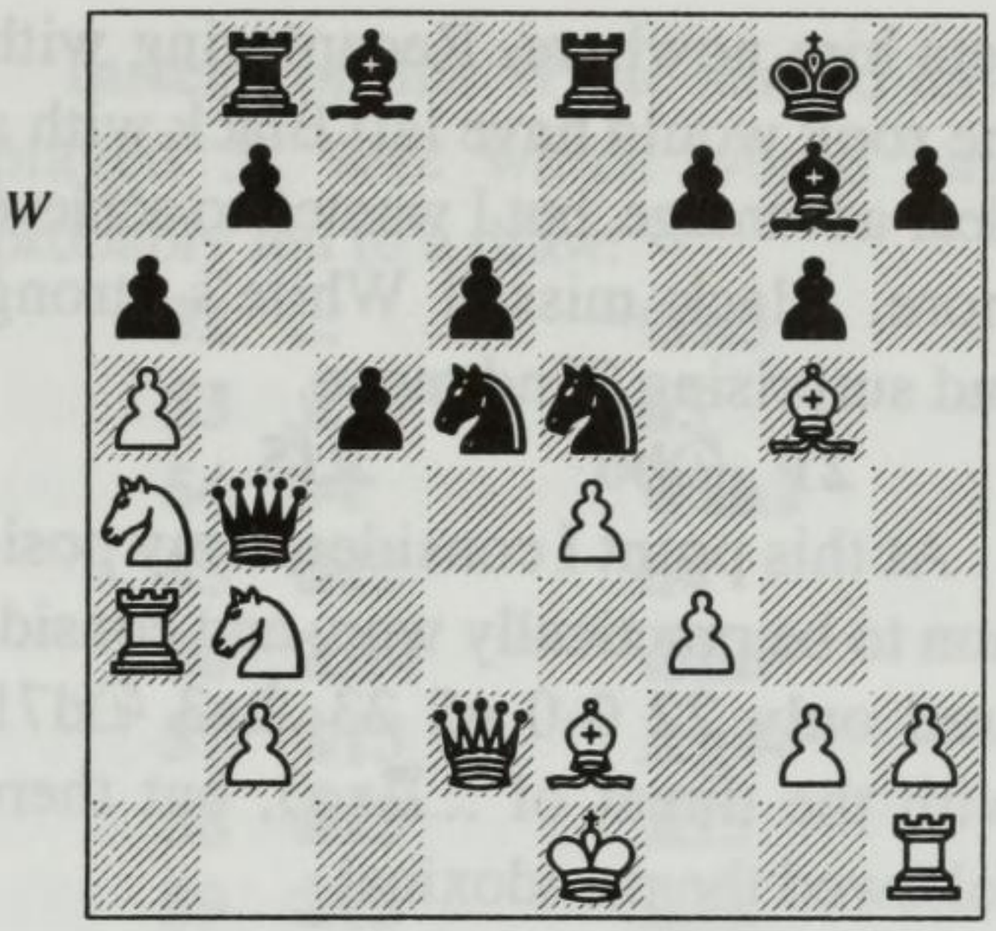
Intending after the exchange of queens to begin a siege of the square b6, but Black is by no means forced to exchange the queens.

**17 ... ♘xd5!** *(D)*

This sacrifice must be accepted.

**18 exd5 h6!**

This quiet move is the point of Black's play. 18...♘d3+ 19 ♔f1 ♘xb2 20 ♕xb4 cxb4 21 ♖a2 was far weaker.




After the text, it turns out that the white bishop has nowhere to retreat to. On 19 ♗f4, 19...♘d3+ decides, while on 19 ♗e3, 19...♘xf3+ 20 gxf3 ♖xe3, and White loses a piece – 21 ♘c1 ♕h4+. In this difficult position White displays great ingenuity.

**19 ♘bxc5!**

Including the rook in the defence along the third rank.

**19 ... dxc5**

**20 ♗f4 ♗d7**

Having obtained a clear advantage, Black begins to 'philosophise'. The preparatory move 20...g5 was much stronger, when after 21 ♗g3 the manoeuvre 21...♗d7 22 ♘b6 ♗b5 is decisive, since White cannot play 23 ♕xb4 cxb4 24 ♖e3 ♘xf3+![1].

I rejected 20...g5 because of 21 ♗xe5. If Black recaptures with the bishop, then there can follow 22 ♕xb4 axb4 23 ♖b3 ♗f5 24 ♖xb4 ♗d3 25 ♖b3 ♗xe2 26 ♔xe2, and Black has a discovered check, which, however,

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1 This does not seem especially clear after 25 ♔f2.

gets him nowhere. Recapturing with the rook would have left Black with a clear advantage, but I wanted to achieve more. Black missed White's strong and surprising 22nd move.

**21 ♘b6 ♗f5**

At this point I considered my position to be practically won, and considered only 22 0-0 g5 23 ♗e3 ♘d7!, with the threat of ...♖xe3, but there followed the paradoxical

**22 ♔d1!**

It turns out that now the exchange of queens is indeed forced.

**22 ... ♖bd8!**
**23 ♕xb4 cxb4**
**24 ♖b3**

Now Black's attack once again flares up. Stronger was 24 ♖e3 after which Black would keep only a minimal advantage by continuing 24...g5 25 ♗g3 ♘d7 26 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 27 ♘c4 ♘f6 28 ♘d6 ♖d8[1].

**24 ... ♘c6!**

Once again White's position has become critical, and once again Franco rises to the occasion.

**25 ♗c4**

White loses after 25 ♗c7 ♘d4 26 ♖xb4 ♗c2+ 27 ♔c1 ♖xe2 28 ♗xd8 ♘b3+ 29 ♖xb3 ♗xb3 when all his pieces are completely helpless.

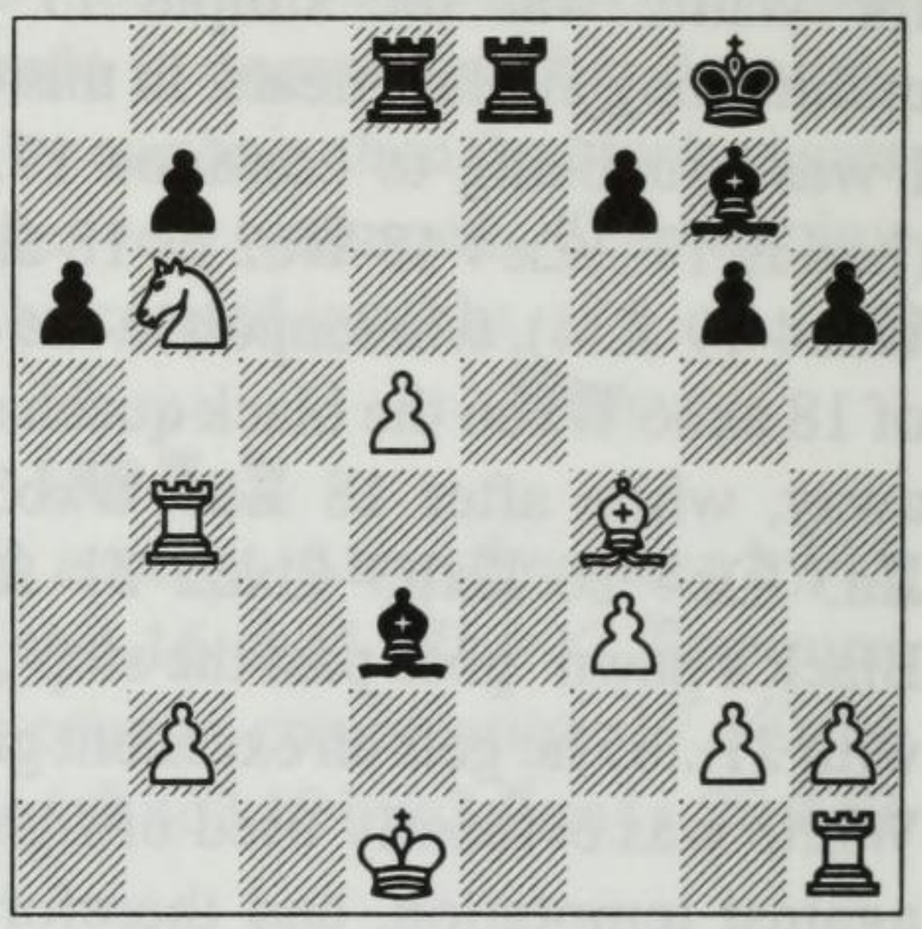
**25 ... ♘xa5**
**26 ♖xb4 ♘xc4**

An oversight. Black forgot that 'you shouldn't expect too much of a good thing'. Considerably stronger was 26...♗d4 27 ♗c7 ♗c5 28 ♖a4 ♗xb6 29 ♗xb6 ♘xc4 30 ♖xc4 ♖xd5+ 31 ♔c1 ♖e2 (or 31...♖e6) with good winning chances. I wanted to avoid the opposite-coloured bishops, but in the final analysis the same ending is reached, only with Black having lost several tempi.

**27 ♖xc4 ♗d3**
**28 ♖b4** *(D)*

The only move. On 28 ♖c7, the reply 28...♖e2 is decisive.

*B*



**28 ... ♗f8**
**29 ♖b3 ♗b5**
**30 ♗c7 ♗c5**
**31 ♖c3 ♗d4**

This was the position which Black had aimed for, assuming that White's best was 32 ♖c2 ♗xb6 33 ♗xb6 ♗a4, when the rook ending should be won. However, the unexpected move ...

**32 ♔c1!**

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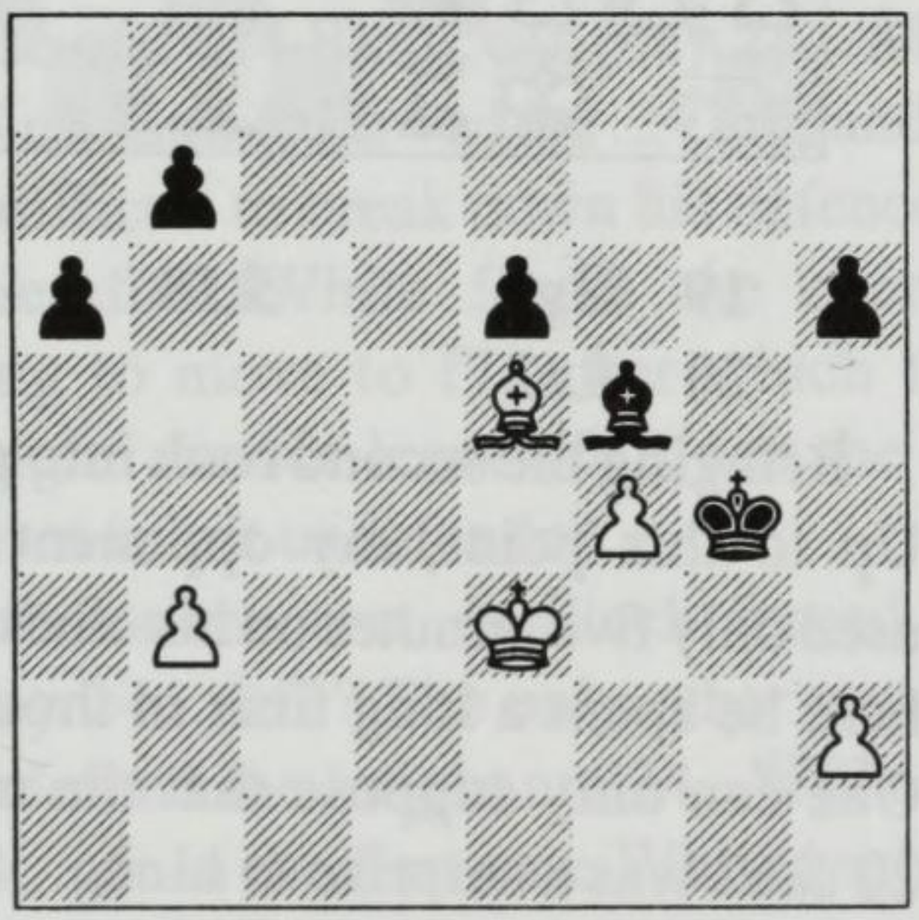
1 After 29 ♗c4 I really cannot see any advantage for Black – indeed, White might be slightly better.

... shattered my illusions. I had to resign myself to the inevitable, and continue ...

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **32** | **...** | **♗xb6** |
| **33** | **♗xb6** | **♖xd5** |

The rest of the game is not of particular interest.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **34** | **♖d1** | **♖de5** |
| **35** | **b3** | **♗c6** |
| **36** | **♗f2** | **♖b5** |
| **37** | **g3** | **♖a5** |
| **38** | **♖d2** | **♖a1+** |
| **39** | **♔b2** | **♖h1** |
| **40** | **♗b6** | **♖f1** |
| **41** | **♗f2** | **g5** |
| **42** | **f4** | **♔h7** |
| **43** | **♖c1** | **♖xc1** |
| **44** | **♔xc1** | **gxf4** |
| **45** | **gxf4** | **♔g6** |
| **46** | **♖d6+** | **♖e6** |
| **47** | **♖xe6+** | **fxe6** |
| **48** | **♗d4** | **♔f5** |
| **49** | **♗e5** | **♔g4** |
| **50** | **♔d2** | **♗e4** |
| **51** | **♔e3** | **♗f5** *(D)* |



*W*

**52 ♗f6**

Instead of this White should have played 52 ♔f2 which would have probably led to a draw.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **52** | **...** | **♔h3** |
| **53** | **♗g7** | **h5** |
| **54** | **b4** | **♔xh2** |
| **55** | **♔f2** | **h4** |
| **56** | **♗d4** | **♔h3** |
| **57** | **♔f3** | **♗g4+** |
| **58** | **♔f2** | **♗f5** |
| **59** | **♔f3** | **♗c2** |
| **60** | **♗b6** | **♗d1+** |
| **61** | **♔f2** | **♔g4** |
| **62** | **♗c7** | **♗c2** |

**0-1**

Game 46

**Tal – Mohrlok**

*Varna Olympiad 1962*

Sicilian Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **c5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **♘c6** |
| **3** | **d4** | **cxd4** |
| **4** | **♘xd4** | **♘f6** |
| **5** | **♘c3** | **d6** |
| **6** | **♗g5** | **e6** |
| **7** | **♕d2** | **♗e7** |
| **8** | **0-0-0** | **0-0** |
| **9** | **♘b3** | |

My opponent played the opening stage of the game very quickly, and it was not difficult to assume that he had made preparations to meet this variation.

I consider the system with 9 ♘b3 to be highly promising, which made it all the more interesting to see what Mohrlok had planned.

This position has occurred in several of my games. Most of my opponents played 9...a6 after which White can capture the pawn by 10 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 11 ♕xd6 and Black has insufficient compensation for his material deficit.

**9 ... ♕b6**

This move, which is nowadays considered the strongest, was played against me in a training game by Koblents (Riga, 1957), and also in a game played by telegraph with Stoltz (1960) – see Game 26.

**10 f3 a6**
**11 g4 ♖d8**
**12 ♗e3 ♕c7**
**13 g5 ♘d7**
**14 h4 b5**
**15 g6! fxg6**

Here Koblents played 15...hxg6 16 h5 gxh5 17 ♖xh5 ♘f6 18 ♖h1 d5 but after 19 e5 ♘xe5 White could have obtained a very strong attack by 20 ♕h2 (instead of 20 ♗f4 as occurred in the game).

Stoltz preferred 15...♘c5, but in this case also after 16 gxf7+ ♔xf7 17 ♗h3, followed by the advance of the f-pawn, the weakness of e6 told.

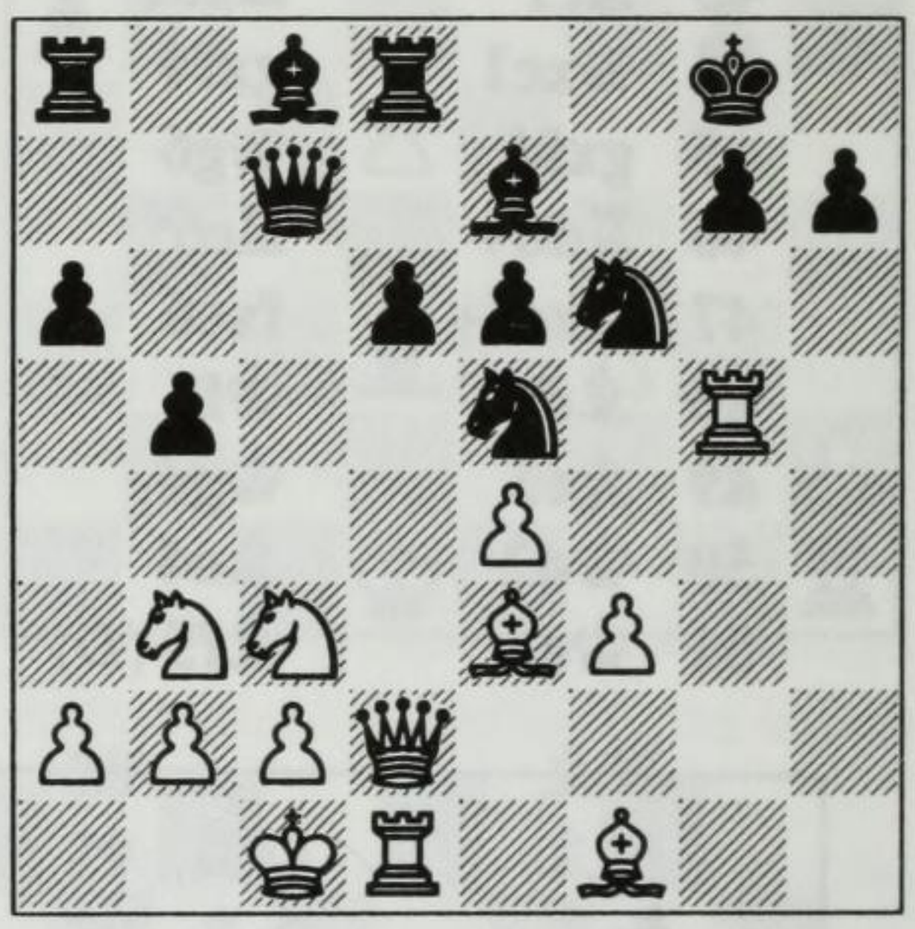
Mohrlok captured on g6 with his f-pawn, as in the game Spassky-Boleslavsky (25th USSR Championship). He made this important decision instantly, and my supposition of specially prepared analysis became conviction. The move 15...fxg6 appears to be the most logical, since Black does not expose his king too much. Now White must at all costs open lines on the kingside, and attack without being afraid to sacrifice.

**16 h5 gxh5**
**17 ♖xh5 ♘f6**
**18 ♖g5**

Only thus! White not only attacks the point g7, but also prevents the freeing move ...d5.

**18 ... ♘e5** *(D)*

I think that Black should have played 18...b4, aiming to carry out the advance ...d5. In this case I was intending to play 19 ♘a4 ♖b8 20 ♕g2 etc., but then the knight on a4 can hardly take part in the attack.


*W*

**19 ♕g2 ♗f8**
**20 ♗e2**

Bringing the second rook into play. Up to this point, my opponent had used only five minutes on his clock, but here he spent a long time in thought. One can only suppose that the move 20 ♗e2 was a surprise to him.

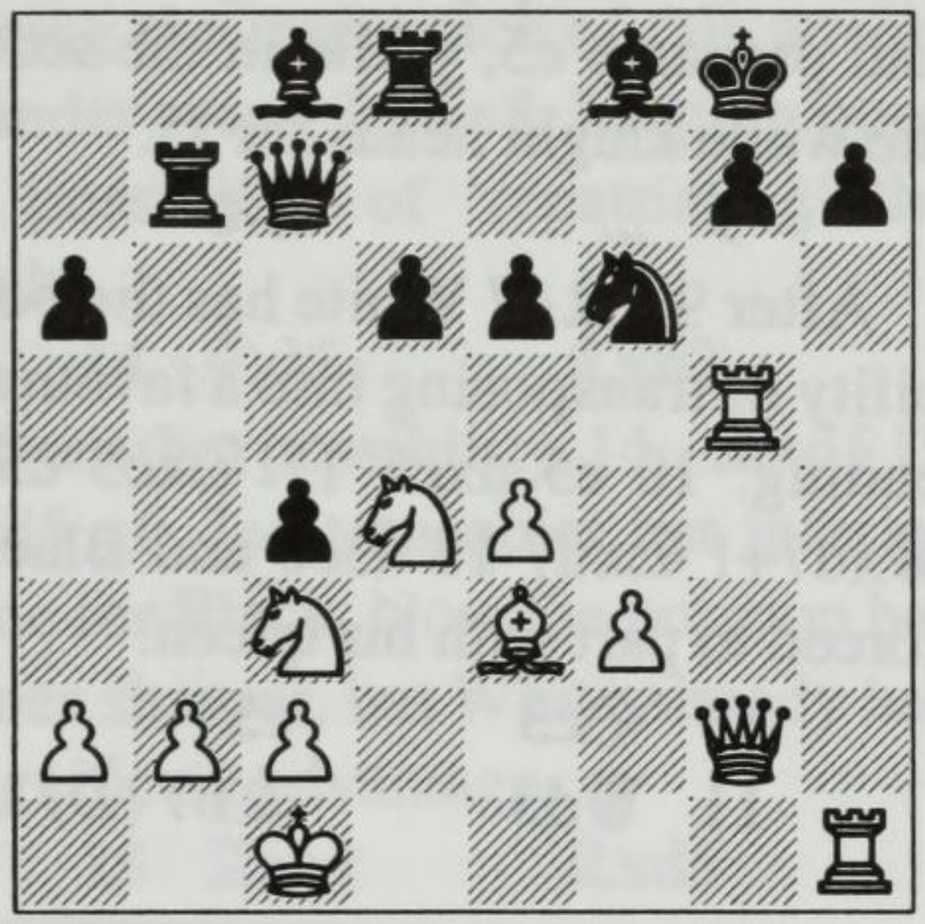
**20 ... ♘c4**
**21 ♗xc4 bxc4**

**22 ♘d4**

White could have played 'brilliantly' – 22 ♖g1 and if 22...cxb3 then 23 ♗b6!. However, Black can reply 22...♖b8, as in the game.

**22 ... ♖b8**

**23 ♖h1 ♖b7** *(D)*




**24 ♖h6!**

The most difficult move in the game. In order to bring his attack to a successful conclusion, White must mobilise his e- and f-pawns in the form of a battering-ram. However, in case of 24 f4 Black can play 24...♔h8 25 e5 ♘g8 followed by ...♘h6, and it is difficult to break down his defences. Therefore White forces the enemy king to move to f7, after which the knight cannot leave f6, since the h-pawn is left undefended.

After the text, is Black forced to play 24...♔f7? The only other moves to defend the knight are 24...♕f7 and 24...g6. In the first case White replies 25 e5 ♘e8 (25...dxe5 26 ♘c6) 26 ♘e4[1] and the threat of 27 ♘f6+ is very dangerous.

Against 24...g6 I had prepared the following combination: 25 ♖gxg6+ (for a long time I could not decide with which rook to capture on g6) 25...hxg6 26 ♖xg6+. Now if Black does not play 26...♔f7, then after 27 ♖xf6 White has a pawn for the exchange, with the enemy king in an exposed position. On 26...♕g7, 27 ♗h6 wins, while in the case of 26...♔f7 27 ♕g5 ♘h7 28 ♕h5 ♘f6 29 ♖xf6+ ♔xf6 30 ♘f5! Black is mated, for example: 30...exf5 31 ♘d5+ ♔g7 32 ♗d4+ ♔g8 33 ♘f6+ ♔g7 34 ♕h7 mate.

**24 ... ♔f7**

**25 ♖h4**

Now, on 25...♔g8, Black must reckon with 26 ♖f4, to which he must reply 26...♘e8. Perhaps this was the best defence, although even in this case White has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn.

**25 ... ♕b6**

**26 ♘d1 ♕c7**

There is no other defence against the threat of 27 ♘xe6.

**27 f4**

Now the threat is 28 e5, when the h-pawn will be under attack.

**27 ... h6**

This weakening of the g6-square leads quickly to defeat. However, there was no longer a satisfactory defence.

---

1 Here 26 ♖gh5 looks crushing.

In answer to 27...e5 White plays 28 ♘f5 ♗xf5 29 ♖xf5 forcing 29...♔e8 whereupon the quiet move 30 ♘c3 demonstrates the futility of further resistance.

**28 ♖g6 ♖e8**

On 28...e5, 29 ♘f5 ♗xf5 30 exf5 decides.

**29 f5 e5**

**30 ♘c3! ♕d8**

30...exd4 loses to 31 ♖xf6+ gxf6 32 ♘d5.

**31 ♘c6 1-0**

Game 47

**Tal – Bannik**

*USSR Championship, Erevan 1962*

Ruy Lopez

**1 e4 e5**

**2 ♘f3 ♘c6**

**3 ♗b5 a6**

**4 ♗a4 ♘f6**

**5 0-0 ♗e7**

**6 ♖e1 d6**

This was already the third time within a month that I had encountered this move; Spassky and Keres played it against me in the USSR Team Championship in October. In both these games I continued 7 c3, and failed to gain any significant advantage.

**7 ♗xc6+**

Normally, convinced 'Spaniards' go in for such exchanges rather reluctantly – the light-squared bishop is involved in their most secret dreams. Here, however, such a change of tune is very much in place. White gains time for the development of his other pieces.

**7 ... bxc6**

**8 d4 exd4**

**9 ♕xd4**

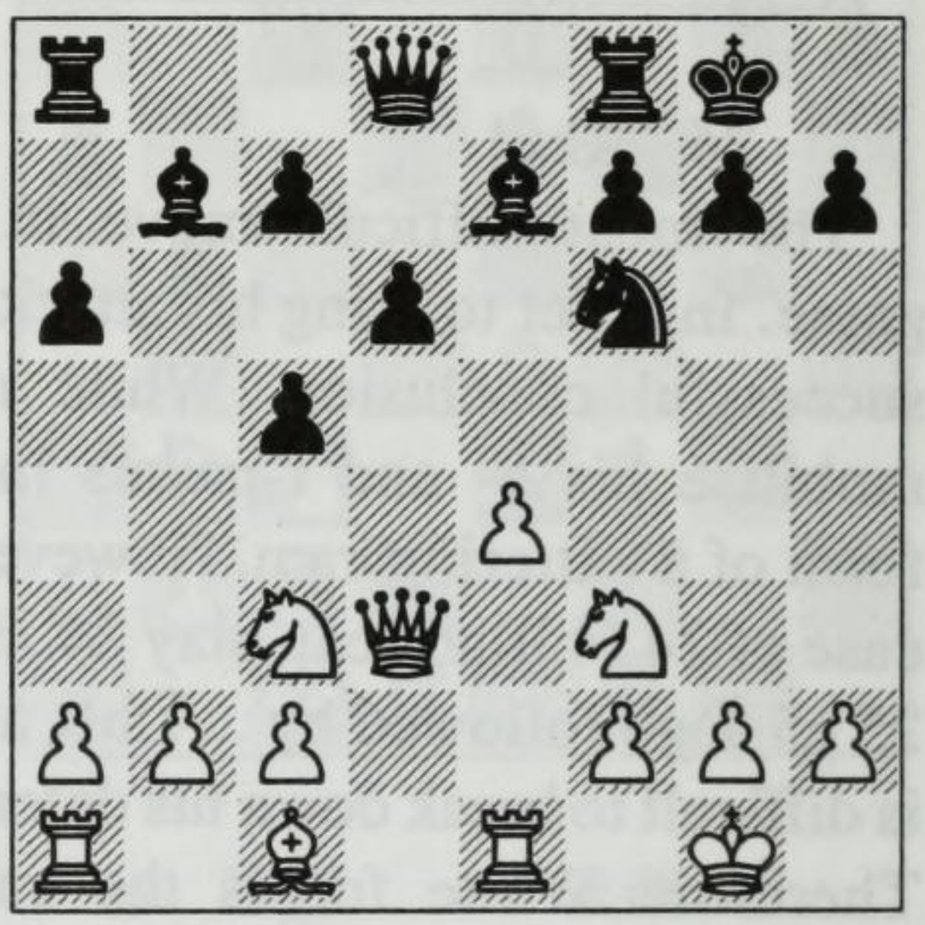
The choice between this move and 9 ♘xd4 is a matter of taste. In the first case White simply develops his forces and prepares e5, while in the second the white knight heads for f5.

**9 ... 0-0**

After 9...♗d7 White has the possibility of transposing into a favourable ending: 10 e5 dxe5 11 ♘xe5 c5 12 ♕xd7+! ♘xd7 13 ♘c6 and Black is forced to part with his queen.

**10 ♘c3 c5**

**11 ♕d3 ♗b7** *(D)*




**12 ♗f4 ♘h5**

A highly ideological continuation, with greater drawbacks than virtues. The pressure on White's e-pawn turns out to be insufficient, while the knight is not only out of play on h5, but is constantly threatened by g2-g4. This becomes even more marked after the

next move. The restrained 12...♘d7, followed by ...♗f6, was in the spirit of the variation chosen by Black.

**13 ♗e3 ♗f6**

The logical consequence of his previous move. The 'encircling' bishops lie in wait for the white b- and e-pawns, but White succeeds in demonstrating the impotence of this attack. Sounder was 13...♖e8, keeping open the possibility of 'repatriating' the knight.

**14 ♘d5 ♗xb2**

The other possibility, 14...♗xd5 15 ♕xd5 g6, led to a quiet but inferior game for Black. Now the position becomes sharper, but White already has a significant advantage.

**15 ♖ab1 ♗xd5**

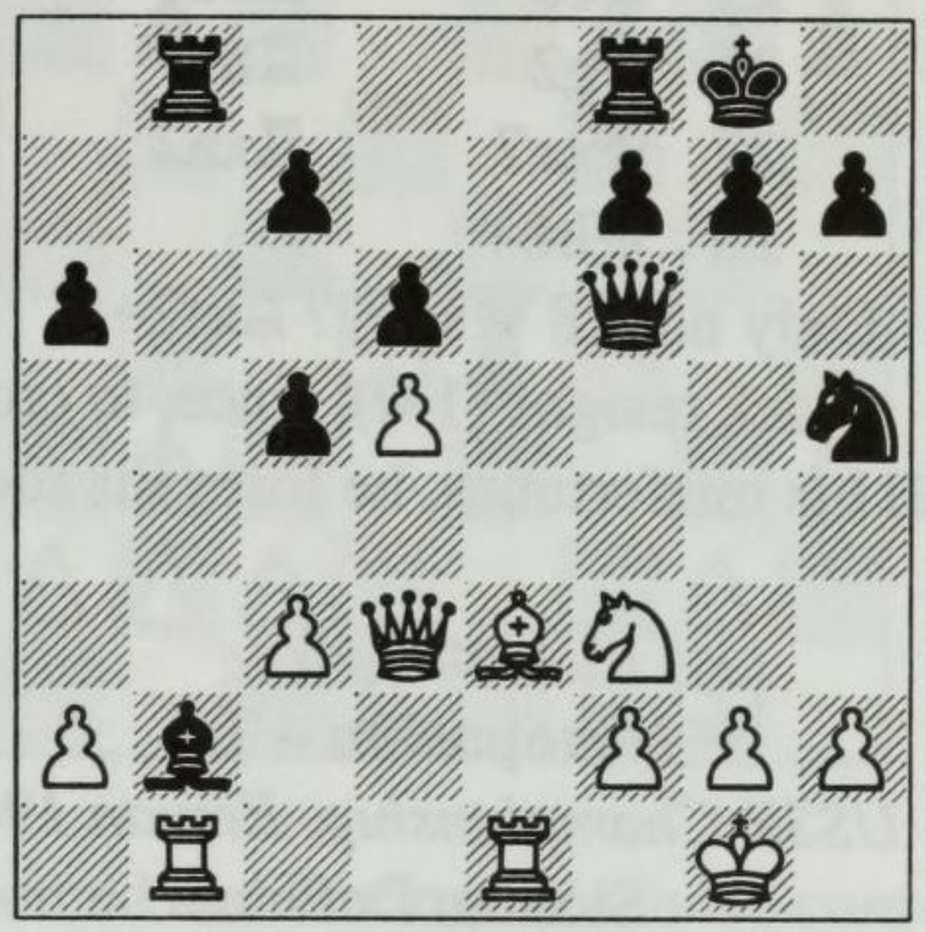
**16 exd5!**

Weaker was 16 ♕xd5 ♘f6 17 ♕c4 ♗e5 18 ♘xe5 dxe5 19 ♗xc5 ♖e8 and Black's position is sound enough.

**16 ... ♖b8**

It must be supposed that it was on this move that my opponent was basing his hopes, since after a lengthy reflection over his 14th move he then played very quickly. Stronger perhaps was 16...♗f6 17 g4 ♕d7 18 h3 (not 18 ♕c4? ♗d4!) 18...g6 19 gxh5 ♕xh3 20 ♗f4 ♕xh5, though in the resulting position the three pawns are hardly equivalent to a piece. Black's idea is revealed in the variation 17 c3 ♕f6 18 ♗d2 ♕g6!, and White cannot turn the extravagant placing of his opponent's pieces to his advantage. However, this idea contains a flaw.

**17 c3 ♕f6** *(D)*



*W*

**18 ♕e2!**

A third, decisive factor comes into effect – the vulnerability of the black king on the back rank, which at the moment appears well defended.

**18 ... ♗xc3**

If 18...♕xc3 then White wins by 19 ♗c1! ♗xc1 20 ♖xb8 g6 21 ♖b3. After other continuations Black loses a piece. Bannik decides to sacrifice his queen, but even this does not complicate White's task.

**19 ♖xb8 ♖xb8**

After 19...♗xe1 20 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 White can play 21 ♗g5!

**20 ♗g5 ♗xe1**

**21 ♗xf6 ♘xf6**

21...♗a5 does not rescue Black in view of 22 ♗b2.

**22 ♕xe1 ♘xd5**

**23 g3 h6**

Black has no time to set his pawns in motion. On 23...c4 the following variation is possible: 24 ♕e4 c3 25 ♕xd5 c2 26 ♕c6!

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **24** | **♕e4** | **♘f6** |
| **25** | **♕c6** | **♖b1+** |
| **26** | **♔g2** | **♖b2** |
| **27** | **♕xc7** | **♖xa2** |
| **28** | **♕b8+** | |

Only not 28 ♕xd6?? ♖xf2+!

Black resigns (**1-0**), since, to crown all his misfortunes, he loses his rook.

Game 48

**Novopashin – Tal**

*USSR Championship, Erevan 1962*

Sicilian Defence

Owing to my illness this game was played during the adjournment period prior to the last round. The position of the tournament leaders was still unclear, but it was certain that to make life uncomfortable for Korchnoi, I had to win this game: a difficult task with the black pieces against a resourceful player like Novopashin.

It was fortunate for me that my opponent chose a very sharp line which suited my style and gave me the chance to gamble on winning more easily – or, of course, to make an error and lose!

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **c5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **d6** |
| **3** | **d4** | **cxd4** |
| **4** | **♘xd4** | **♘f6** |
| **5** | **♘c3** | **e6** |
| **6** | **♗c4** | **♗e7** |
| **7** | **♗b3** | **0-0** |
| **8** | **f4** | |

This is the Sozin attack, which is more usually employed after Black has played the system with 2...♘c6 and 5...d6 or 2...d6 and 5...a6, to avoid the Boleslavsky variation starting with ...e5. Novopashin has been working hard on theoretical problems and this made Black's task more difficult: for example 8...a6 and also 8...♘c6 lead to very deeply analysed positions for which Novopashin was obviously prepared.

I had to find something out of the book – even if only to gain a psychological advantage.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **8** | **...** | **♘a6** |

The knight is aimed at e4 without delay.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **9** | **♕f3** | **♘c5** |
| **10** | **♗e3** | **d5** |

A very sharp line which forces White to play against the isolated d-pawn or revert to a type of French Defence. If 11 e5 I would have replied 11...♘fe4 and if 12 ♘xe4 then 12...dxe4! 13 ♕e2 ♕a5+, and now 14 ♕d2 is not good because of 14...♘d3+!.

Of course the exchange on e4 is not forced and the choice lies with my opponent.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **11** | **exd5** | **exd5** |
| **12** | **0-0** | |

White cannot play 12 ♘xd5 ♘xb3! nor 12 ♗xd5 ♗g4! 13 ♕g3 ♘xd5 with the threat of ...♗h4.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | **...** | **♖e8** |

Again the pawn is indirectly protected; after 13 ♗xd5 comes 13...♗g4

14 ♕g3 ♘xd5 15 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 16 ♕xg4 ♗f6 17 ♘f5 g6![1] or possibly 17...♖xe3!?

**13 h3 ♘ce4**

Protecting the pawn which was threatened by White's last move.

**14 ♘xe4**

This exchange, which strengthens Black's pawn, gives White no advantage, even with Sozin's bishop free for the attack on Black's king. Better for White would be 14 ♖ad1 ♘xc3 15 bxc3 and 16 c4! or the positional 14 ♘ce2 followed by g4 with a slight advantage for White.

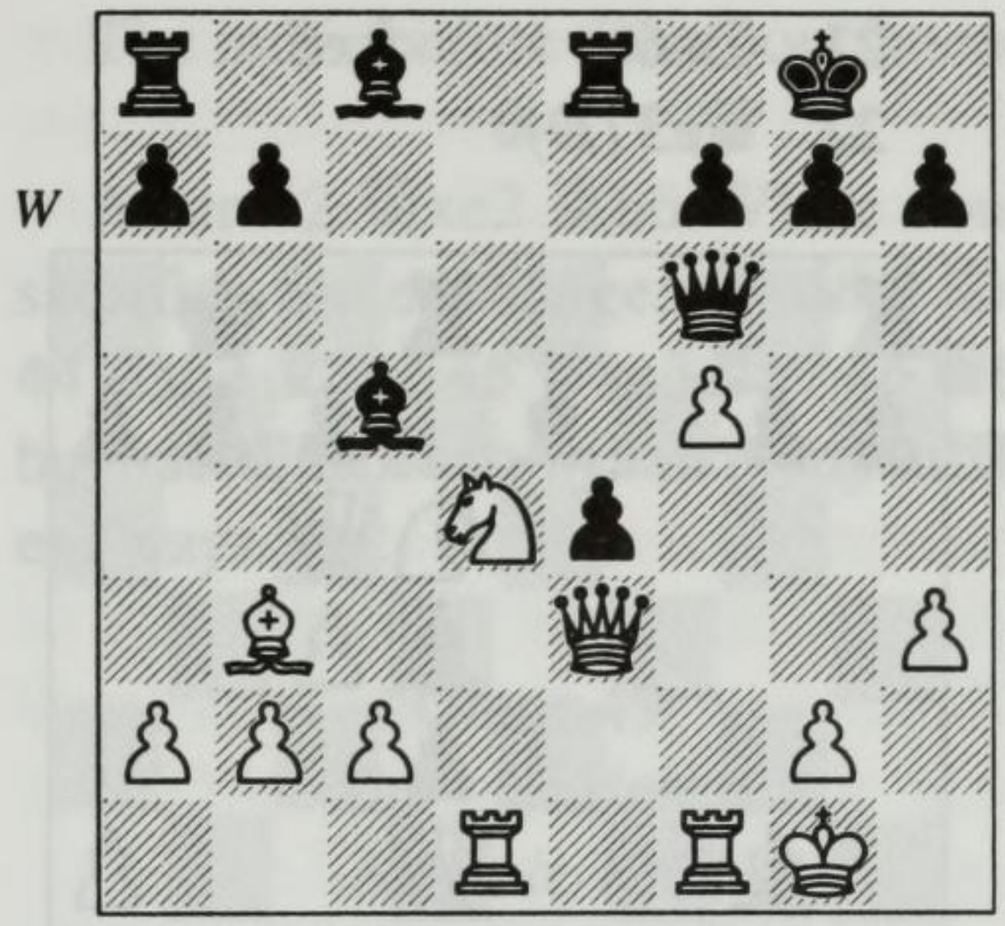
**14 ... dxe4**
**15 ♕e2 ♘d5**
**16 ♖ad1**

The continuation of White's plan. If White would give up his attacking plan, then after 16 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 17 c4 ♕a5 18 b3 he has equality, whereas in the actual game White is forced to guard against the enormous potential power of the advanced pawn with his queen, which puts him at a great disadvantage.

**16 ... ♘xe3**
**17 ♕xe3 ♗c5**
**18 f5**

White continues to attack, but to have any chance of avoiding defeat he should first have protected his knight on d4 with 18 c3.

**18 ... ♕f6** *(D)*




Forced and forcing: this move completely answers the threat of 19 f6.

**19 ♔h1**

The pin is unpleasant, but after 19 ♖f4 there would follow 19...♕e5 (not 19...♗xf5 20 g4 ♕g5 21 ♗xf7+!) 20 c3 ♗xf5[2].

**19 ... ♗d7**
**20 ♕c3**

This move frees the a7-g1 diagonal, but allows the pawn to advance. After 20 ♗d5 could follow 20...♗b5 21 c4 ♖ad8! when White would lose at least a pawn.

**20 ... ♗d6**

Not 20...♖ac8 when 21 ♘e6![3] would be powerful, nor 20...♗b6 21 ♘e2! (if 21 ♘e6 then 21...♕xc3 22 bxc3 ♗b5 23 c4 ♗a6) 21...♗b5 22 ♕xf6 gxf6 23 c4 ♗c6 24 ♘d4 ♗d7 25 ♘e6! and White has an easy game. As Black already controls the b8-h2 diagonal White cannot hesitate.

---

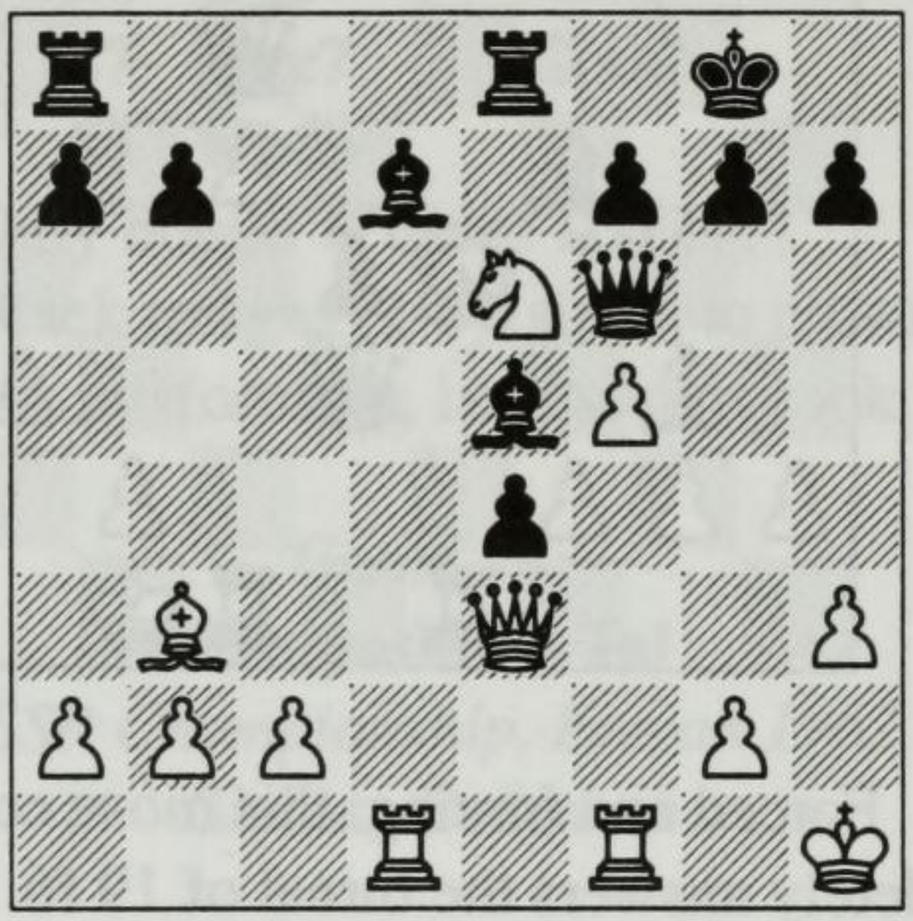
1 After 17...g6 18 ♘h6+, followed by 19 ♖ad1, Black has an awful position. Moreover, 17...♖xe3!? is hardly convincing.

2 I don't understand this line as White can play 21 ♖xf5 ♗xd4 22 ♗xf7+ at the end.

3 20...♖ac8 21 ♘e6 ♕xc3 22 bxc3 ♗b5 23 c4 ♗a6 looks very good for Black.

**21 ♘e6! ♗e5**
**22 ♕e3** *(D)*

*B*



The bishop is still there on b3! In my provisional calculations I thought that the best continuation would be 22...♗c6 23 ♘g5 ♖e7 24 ♘xe4 ♕h4 25 ♗d5 ♗xd5 26 ♖xd5 ♗xb2 27 ♖f4 ♕h6 leading to a slight advantage for Black. More risky would be 22...♗b5, but then after 23 ♘g5 ♗xf1 24 ♘xf7 ♔f8 White has a choice between the quiet move 25 ♖xf1 with enough play for the exchange, or the sharp continuation 25 ♘g5 ♕xf5 26 ♕c5+ ♖e7 27 ♕d5! which gives a draw at least.

While I was thinking about these two variations I suddenly realised that Black also has a third possibility.

**22 ... ♖e7!**
**23 ♘c5 ♕b6!**

Similar variations would follow after 23 ♘g5 ♕h6!

**24 ♕g5**

An ingenious try to avoid the pin, but this also completely destroys the blockade of the e-pawn. There is also a different tactical idea: 24 f6 gxf6! (not 24...♗xf6 due to 25 ♖xf6!) 25 ♕xe4 but after 25...♗c6 (not 25...♕xc5 26 ♖xd7!) Black's bishops would come into the game.

**24 ... ♗f6**
**25 ♘xd7 ♖xd7**

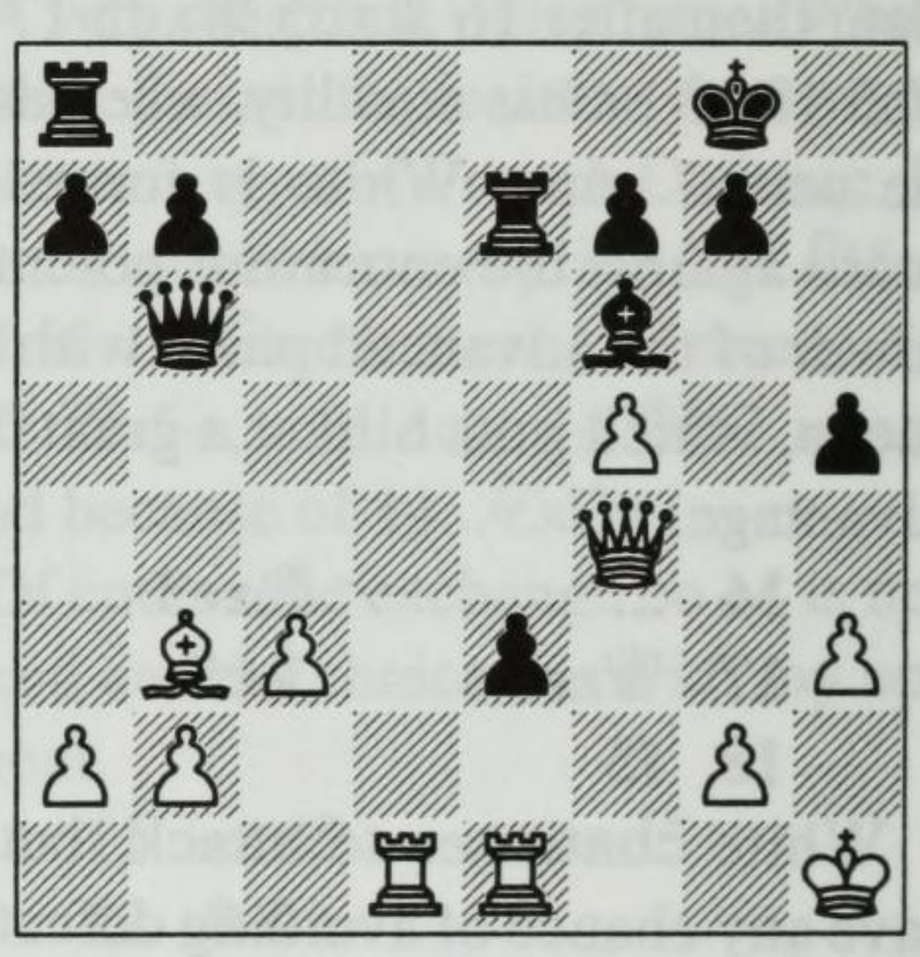
Now, I think, the game is lost for White. Black has everything he wants: a dangerous passed pawn, a passive white bishop on b3 and finally opposite-coloured bishops, which help the weaker side in the endgame, but in the middlegame can be a deciding factor for the stronger side.

**26 ♕f4 ♖e7**

Of course the exchange of rooks would help White.

**27 ♖fe1 e3**
**28 c3 h5!** *(D)*

*W*



Black prepares to play ...h4 to take control of the dark square g3.

**29 ♖e2 ♖ae8**
**30 ♕d6 ♕b5**
**31 ♕d3 ♕e5**
**32 ♖f1**

This move stops 32...♕g3 and also prepares to cover the d-file with ♗d5 and c4.

**32 ... a6!**

Counterplay against this idea. Now, after 33...b5, White's pieces will feel uncomfortable.

**33 ♖f3 b5**

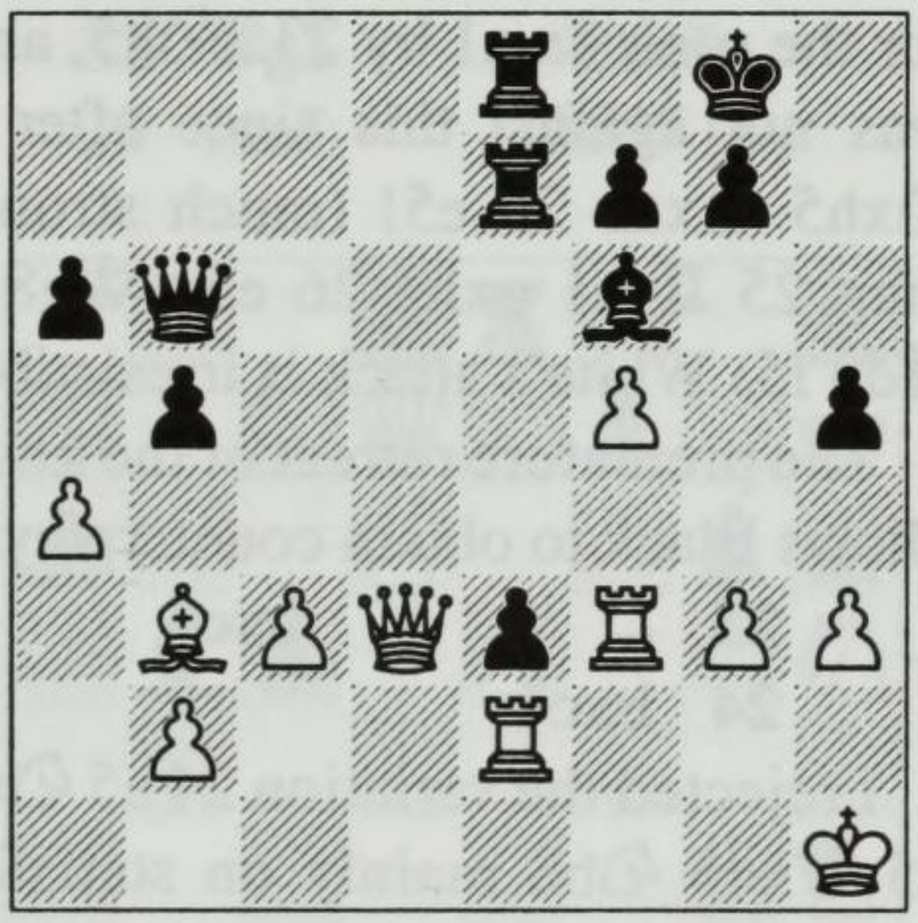
Black did not fall into the trap: 33...h4 34 ♕d5 ♕c7 35 ♕c4 ♕b8 36 ♖fxe3!

**34 g3 ♕c5!**

**35 a4**

Worse would be 35 ♕d5 ♕c7 with the threat 36...♖d8.

**35 ... ♕b6** *(D)*




**36 ♕c2**

Better would be 36 h4.

**36 ... ♕b7**

**37 ♔g2 ♖d8**

**38 axb5 axb5**

Control of the d-file makes the win a certainty for Black.

**39 ♕c1 ♗g5**

**40 h4 ♖d2**

**41 ♕f1 ♖xe2+**

The move before the adjournment.

**0-1**

After 42 ♕xe2 ♗h6 White could sacrifice the exchange: 43 ♔h2 ♖d7 44 ♖xe3 ♗xe3 45 ♕xe3 ♖e7 46 ♕f2, but now Black can win in many different ways.

Game 49

**Tal – Ghitescu**

*Miskolc 1963*

Ruy Lopez

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **e5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **♘c6** |
| **3** | **♗b5** | **a6** |
| **4** | **♗a4** | **♘f6** |
| **5** | **0-0** | **♗e7** |
| **6** | **♖e1** | **b5** |
| **7** | **♗b3** | **d6** |
| **8** | **c3** | **0-0** |
| **9** | **h3** | **h6** |
| **10** | **d4** | **♖e8** |
| **11** | **♘bd2** | **♗f8** |
| **12** | **♘f1** | **♗d7** |
| **13** | **♘g3** | **♘a5** |
| **14** | **♗c2** | **c5** |

This position first occurred in the Tal-Smyslov game from the 29th USSR Championship. Since I had not the slightest desire to find out at what point Black's play could be improved (there could be no doubt that my opponent was acquainted with this game), I avoided 15 d5 here in favour of the rarely-played 15 b3.

**15 b3 g6**

This reply is inaccurate because, firstly, it weakens the kingside, and

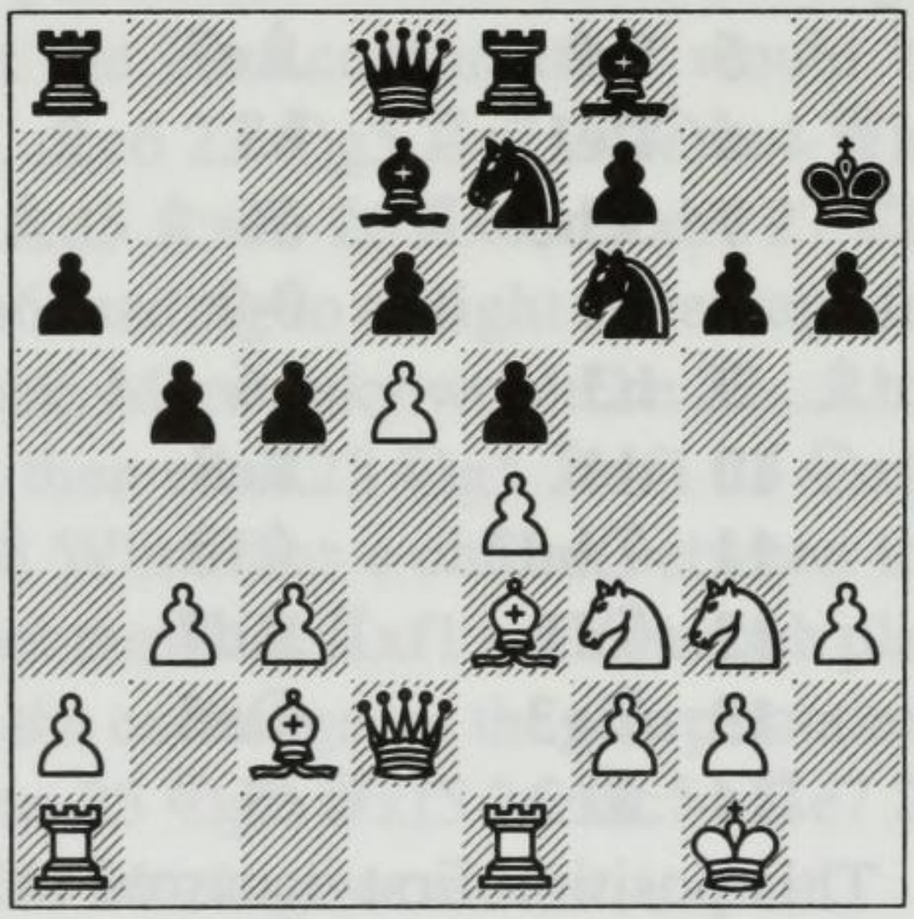
secondly, the g6-square could have been used by a knight (after the manoeuvre ...♘c6-e7). Stronger was the immediate 15...♘c6 as, incidentally, was played in the game Stein-Zilber from the 30th USSR Championship Semi-final.

**16 ♗e3 ♘c6**

Black was worried about the positional threat of d5, cutting off his knight on a5.

**17 d5 ♘e7**
**18 ♕d2 ♔h7** *(D)*

The somewhat disorganised state of the black pieces suggests to White the idea of a possible piece sacrifice.




**19 ♗xc5!**

In fact this sacrifice owes its existence to Bronstein, for it was on this very day that he told me about his game with Rojahn (11th Chess Olympiad, Moscow 1956), which began as follows: 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♘f6 4 ♘g5 d5 5 exd5 ♘a5 6 d3 h6 7 ♘f3 e4 8 dxe4 ♘xc4 9 ♕d4 and subsequently the avalanche of white pawns swept away everything in its path. The idea of the sacrifice in the diagram position is roughly the same. White succeeds in setting up a solid pawn-roller, and at the first opportunity sets it in motion.

**19 ... dxc5**
**20 ♘xe5 ♘c8**
**21 f4 ♕e7**
**22 c4! ♗g7**
**23 ♘f3**

Hastily played. After the preparatory 23 ♖ad1 ♘d6 24 ♗d3 Black would have been unable, as in the game, to give back the piece successfully. In playing 23 ♘f3, I assumed that my opponent was planning to go for the rook on a1 by 23...♘h5, and I was not against this since after 24 ♘xh5 ♗xa1 25 e5! (much stronger than 25 ♖xa1 gxh5 26 e5+ ♔g8 27 ♕d3 f5) White's attack is irresistible.

The premature retreat of the knight allows Black to obtain counterplay.

**23 ... bxc4**
**24 bxc4**

I rejected the variation 24 e5 ♘xd5 25 ♕xd5 ♘b6 mainly on statistical grounds – I did not want to part with my opponent's piece. Ghitescu is determined.

**24 ... ♘d6**
**25 e5**

White has to agree, since on 25 ♗d3 Black replies 25...♘fxe4.

**25 ... ♘xc4**
**26 ♕c3**

After 26 ♕d3, 26...♘b2 is unpleasant.

**26 ... ♗b5**
**27 ♖ad1 ♖ad8**
**28 d6**

At last White decides to win back his piece.

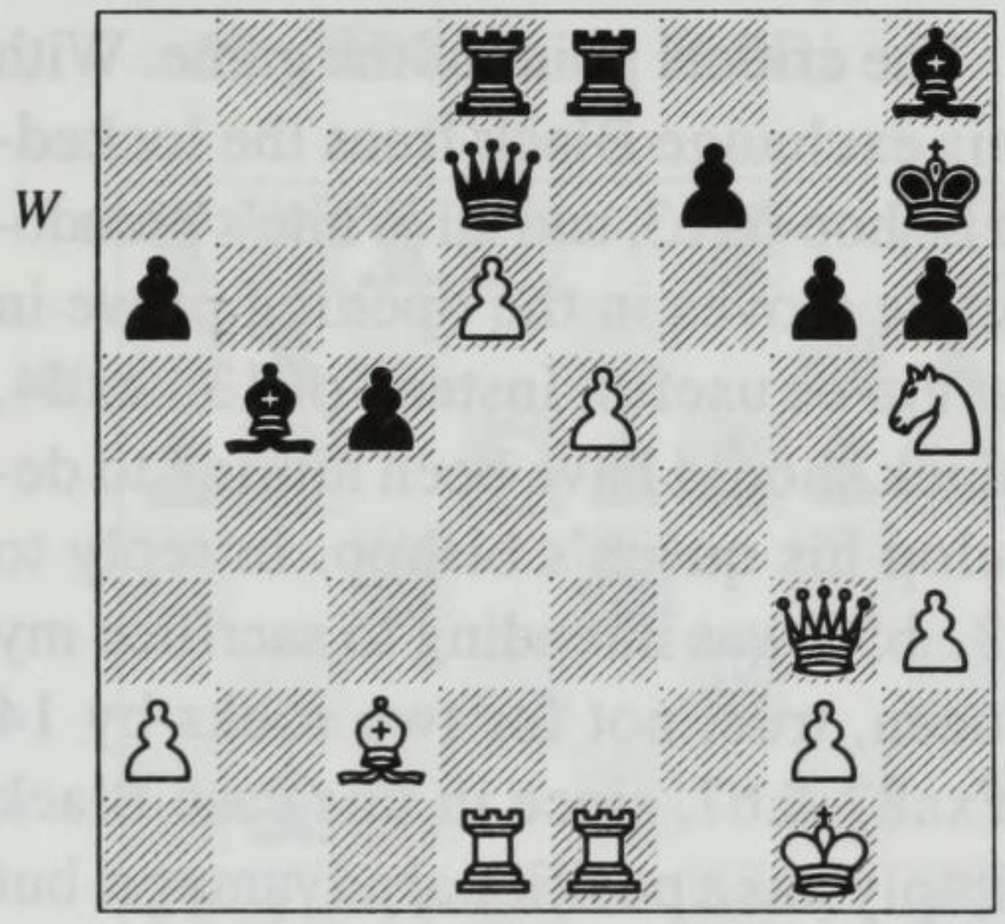
**28 ... ♘xd6**
**29 exd6 ♕b7**

29...♕f8, keeping an eye on the d-pawn, was stronger. I was planning to reply 30 ♕xc5 whereas now an attack can be considered.

**30 ♘e5 ♘d7**
**31 ♘h5!**

By a two-move manoeuvre White forces the exchange on e5, after which his pawns are once again in order.

**31 ... ♗h8**
**32 ♕g3 ♘xe5**
**33 fxe5 ♕d7** *(D)*



**34 ♘f4!**

A simple combination, after which White obtains a decisive advantage.

**34 ... ♗xe5**
**35 ♗xg6+ ♔h8**

If 35...fxg6 36 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 then 37 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 38 ♕f6+ decides.

**36 ♗xf7 ♗d4+**

The alternatives 36...♕xf7 37 ♘g6+ and 36...♗xf4 37 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 38 ♕xf4 are no better.

**37 ♖xd4 ♖xe1+**
**38 ♕xe1 ♕xf7**

On 38...cxd4 the most accurate is 39 ♕e5+ ♔h7 40 ♕e4+ ♔h8 41 ♕g6 ♕xd6 42 ♘e6.

**39 ♕e5+ ♕g7**
**40 ♕xc5 ♗c6**
**41 ♖d2 1-0**

## Game 50

## Tal – Bilek

*Miskolc 1963*

Pirc Defence

**1 e4 d6**

This game was played in the penultimate round, when a draw was quite sufficient to give me first place, but of course, in meeting the Hungarian Champion, who at this moment was sharing 2nd and 3rd places with Bronstein, I wanted to engage in an open battle. Therefore I was very pleased when Bilek, in answer to 1 e4, played 1...d6 showing that he too was striving for a complicated game.

**2 d4 g6**
**3 ♘c3 ♗g7**
**4 ♘f3 c6**
**5 ♗c4 ♘f6**

Lovers of head-spinning variations can try analysing the possible continuation 5...b5!? 6 ♘xb5 d5! (and not 6...cxb5 7 ♗d5) 7 ♗b3 dxe4 8 ♘g5 cxb5 with highly interesting play. Of

course, White can, if he wishes, simply play 6 ♗b3.

**6 e5**

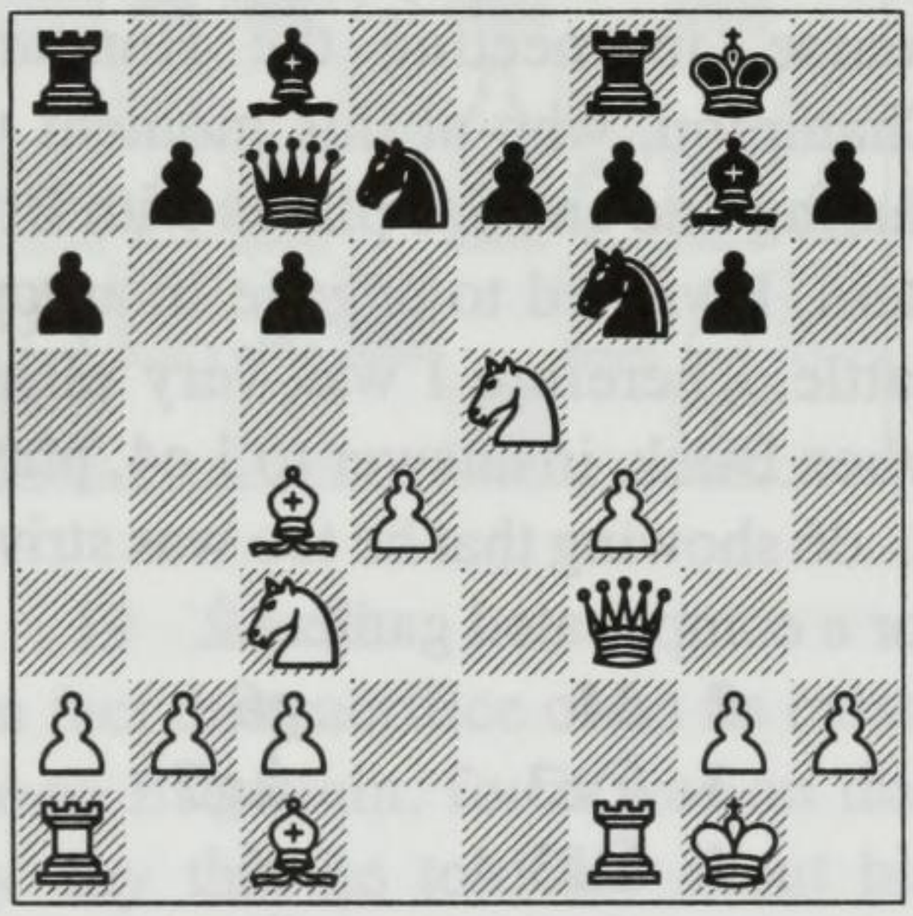
This is hardly the way to obtain an advantage. The activity of the white pieces turns out to be fictitious.

**6 ... dxe5**
**7 ♘xe5 0-0**
**8 0-0 ♘bd7**
**9 f4**

Furman sometimes says jokingly: 'As you make your bed, so must you lie in it'. White is already forced to fulfil the obligations which he took upon himself by playing 6 e5, but of course 9 f4 also has its darker side.

**9 ... ♕c7**
**10 ♕f3 a6!** *(D)*

The immediate 10...c5 would fail after 11 ♘b5 ♕b8 12 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 13 ♕b3.



**11 ♖e1 e6**

Black defends against possible combinative attacks on the f7- and e7-squares. Stronger, however, was the immediate 11...b5 when the following variation does not work: 12 ♘xc6 bxc4 13 ♘xe7+ ♔h8 14 ♕xa8 ♗b7 15 ♕a7 ♖a8 or more simply 12...♗b7 13 ♘xe7+ ♔h8, and White loses a piece. After 12 ♗b3 ♗b7 Black's position would be in no way inferior.

**12 ♗b3**

I spent some time analysing the consequences of 12 f5 but rejected it since Black can reply either 12...gxf5 or 12...exf5 13 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 14 ♖e7 ♕d6! when White's pieces come unstuck. By retreating his bishop, White at least does not allow his opponent to gain a tempo by ...b5.

**12 ... c5**
**13 ♗e3**

White gains nothing by 13 d5 exd5 14 ♗xd5 ♘b6!

**13 ... cxd4**

The critical point of the game. With this exchange Black frees the locked-in bishop on e3, and all White's pseudo-active moves in the opening prove in fact to be useful. Instead of 13...cxd4, Black should have been aiming to develop his queen's bishop. In reply to 13...b5 I was intending to sacrifice my queen, true, not for two rooks by 14 ♕xa8? ♗b7, since in this case Black simply has a positional advantage, but for three minor pieces: 14 dxc5! ♗b7 15 c6 ♘xe5 16 fxe5 ♗xc6 17 exf6 ♗xf3 18 fxg7 ♖fd8 19 gxf3 with a sharp and apparently promising game. Strongest was the simple 13...b6! with quite a good position.

**14 ♗xd4 ♘xe5**
**15 fxe5!**

Only with the pawn, of course, because White is not at all afraid of losing it.

**15 ... ♘d7**

**16 ♘e4**

The threat of 16...♘c5 was much more dangerous than the attack on the e-pawn. The price for this pawn will be too great. If it is captured then the dark squares in the vicinity of Black's king will be without an important defender.

**16 ... ♗xe5**

16...♘xe5 fails to 17 ♘f6+.

**17 ♗xe5 ♕xe5**

**18 ♖ad1 ♔g7**

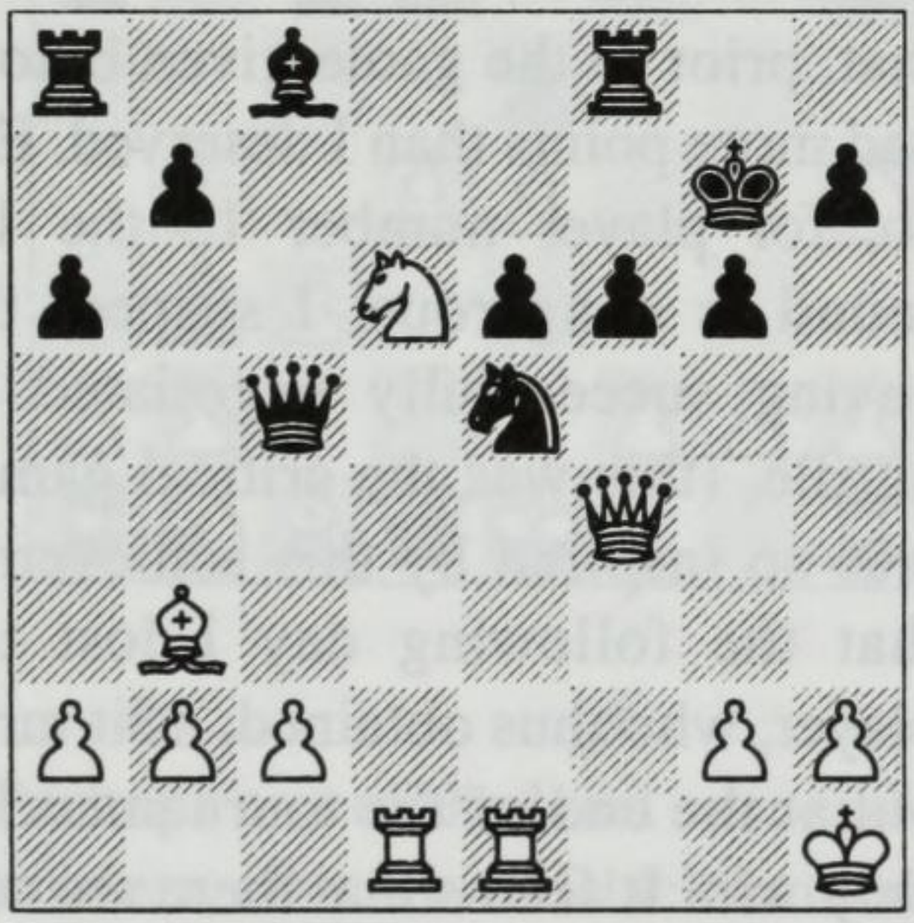
19 ♖xd7 was threatened.

**19 ♘d6 ♕c5+**

**20 ♔h1 ♘e5**

20...♘f6? 21 ♕xf6+!

**21 ♕f4 f6** *(D)*



*W*

With all his pieces in dominating positions, the conditions are right for White's attack to develop unhindered. First of all he takes control of the square f6.

**22 ♖f1**

Now Black has to reckon with the threat of 23 ♘e8+. After lengthy reflection Bilek played ...

**22 ... a5**

... intending to smoke out the knight from d6, and in some cases threatening ...a4.

Now 23 ♘e8+ only gives White a draw after 23...♖xe8 24 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 25 ♖d8 ♖xd8! (25...♗d7? 26 ♗xe6+) 26 ♕xd8+ ♔g7, or 25 ♖de1 a4! 26 ♖xe5 ♕f8, when 27 ♖xe6 fails to 27...axb3. White includes his h-pawn in the attack, so as to break up further the enemy kingside.

**23 h4 ♖a6**

24 ♘e8+ was now really threatened, for example: 23...a4 24 ♘e8+ ♖xe8 25 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 26 ♖d8 ♖xd8 27 ♕xd8+ ♔g7 28 ♕f6+ ♔g8 29 h5 gxh5[1] 30 ♕g5+ ♔h8 31 ♖f7 ♘xf7 32 ♕xc5 and because of the threatened mate Black has no time to capture the bishop. From a6 the rook defends the e-pawn, and therefore White changes his plan of attack.

**24 ♘e4 ♕e7**

**25 h5 h6**

Once again Black had no time for 25...a4 owing to 26 h6+, while if 25...gxh5 then 26 ♘xf6 ♕xf6 27 ♕g3+ was possible. 25...g5 was probably strongest, when I was intending simply to retreat my queen to g3.

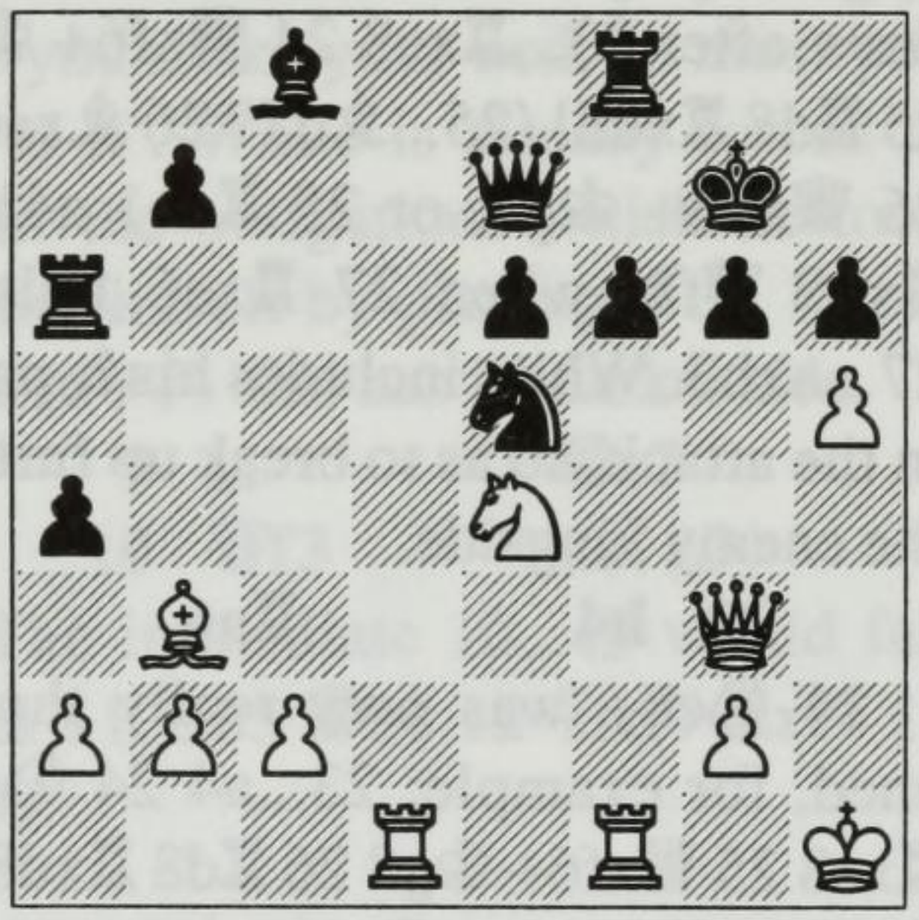
---

1 After 29...♗d7 I see no win.

**26 ♕g3!**

It is interesting that only in this way can White strengthen his attack. The move 25...h6 weakened the g6-square, and now White trains all his pieces on it. On 26...♕c7 the following line decides: 27 hxg6 a4 28 ♘xf6 ♖xf6 29 ♖xf6 ♔xf6 30 g7! Black, under-estimating White's possibilities, played ...

**26 ... a4** *(D)*



**27 ♖xf6!**

The knight is worth more than the rook.

**27 ... ♖xf6**
**28 ♕xe5 axb3**
**29 axb3**

White's position is so strong that he has no reason to hurry. It is extremely difficult for Black to escape from the pin. On 29...♔f7, 30 ♘xf6 ♕xf6 31 ♕c7+ is decisive, while on 29...g5 White can either continue as in the game, or else play 30 ♖f1 ♖a5 31 ♕xf6+ with a won ending. The best chance was 29...gxh5, and on 30 ♖f1 ♖a5! Instead, I was intending to play 30 ♘xf6 ♕xf6 31 ♕c7+ ♔g6 32 ♕xc8 which leads to a clear advantage for White.

**29 ... b6**
**30 b4**

This prevents ...♖a5, and maintains all the threats.

**1-0**

## Game 51
## Tal – Letelier
*Capablanca Memorial Tournament, Havana 1963*
Ruy Lopez

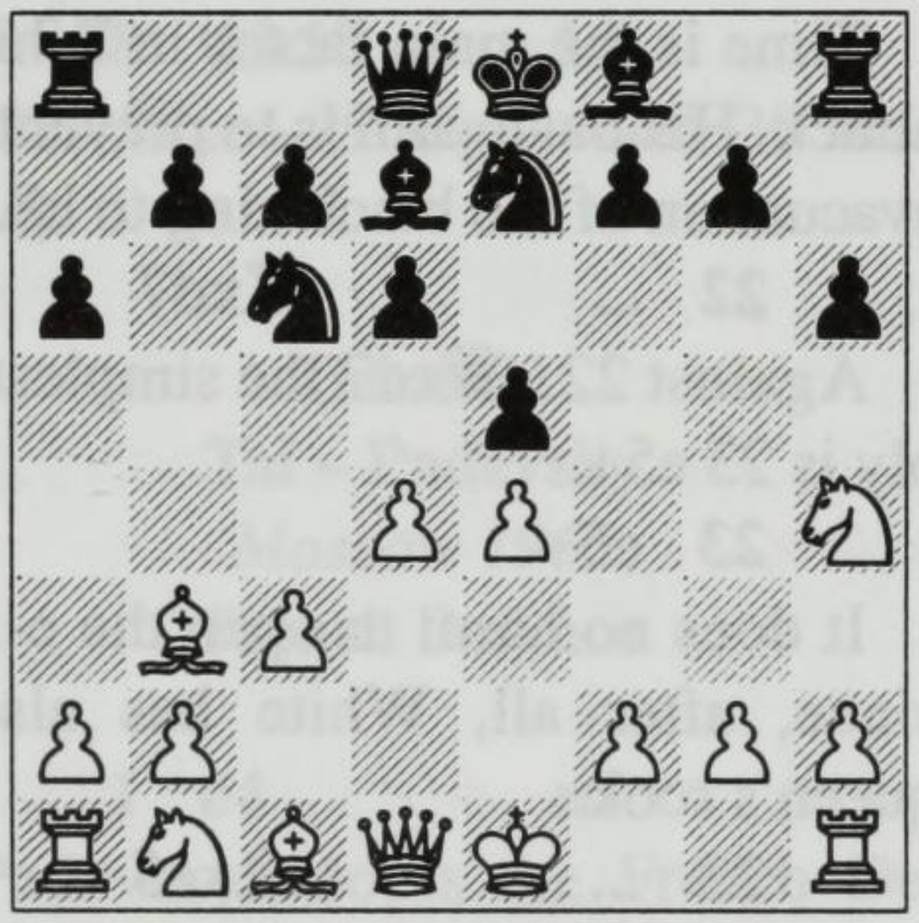
When I drew the number 13 in the Havana Tournament, the other players, the controllers and spectators greeted this with jovial applause. Strictly speaking, I had no grounds for complaining of any obvious ill fortune in the tournament, and I would even say that, prior to the game given below, I had more points than I deserved. Even so, for player number 13 the 13th round is dangerous. I suspect that, having successfully negotiated this hurdle, (this was the critical game) I was so inspired by this achievement that the following day I lost to a player, who thus obtained, as it turned out at the end of the tournament, his only win. It seems that there are other numbers which are also dangerous ...

**1 e4 e5**
**2 ♘f3 ♘c6**
**3 ♗b5 a6**
**4 ♗a4 d6**
**5 c3**

At that time this was considered the main continuation. 5 0-0 was only just coming into fashion. My opponent, to judge by the early rounds of the tournament, regarded opening problems as an unavoidable evil, and therefore I decided that I could confidently go in for a theoretical battle.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **5** | **...** | **♗d7** |
| **6** | **d4** | **♘ge7** |
| **7** | **♗b3** | **h6** |
| **8** | **♘h4** *(D)* | |

Somewhat unsophisticated, but at the same time quite a dangerous method of play, involving an immediate attack on f7. The threat of 9 ♕f3 must be parried, but how?



*B*

**8 ... g5**

Perhaps one of the least successful rejoinders, after which Black immediately finds himself in a critical position. The crucial continuation here is 8...exd4!? (this move was brought into practice by Bannik in the 1956 USSR Championship, in his game with me). After 9 cxd4 ♘xd4 10 ♕xd4 ♘c6 11 ♕d5 (in the aforementioned game, I played the weaker 11 ♗xf7+? ♔xf7 12 ♕d5+ ♗e6 13 ♕h5+ ♔g8 and Black perhaps already stood better) 11...♕xh4 12 ♕xf7+ ♔d8 13 ♘c3 ♘e5 14 ♕d5 ♗c6 15 ♕d4 ♗e7! a very complicated position arises. It seems that the most recent time it was tested was in the game Tukmakov-Larsen, Leningrad Interzonal 1973, when the opening battle was won by Black, but I would expect that the final verdict on the variation has not yet been reached.

**9 ♕h5**

Perhaps Black simply forgot to include the moves 8...♘a5 9 ♗c2!?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **9** | **...** | **♖h7** |
| **10** | **♗xg5** | **exd4** |

Black has managed to maintain material equality, but this is the only thing he can be pleased about.

**11 f4**

In the game with Bannik mentioned above, I allowed the manoeuvre ...♘e5 and ...♗g4, after which I had to give up a piece to save my queen. By the advance of his f-pawn, White paralyses the enemy queenside, so that Black is unable to hide his king there.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **11** | **...** | **♕c8** |
| **12** | **f5** | |

In itself the square e5 is of no real value to Black.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | **...** | **dxc3** |
| **13** | **♘xc3** | **♘e5** |

Now, at last, the white bishop is really threatened.

**14 ♗f6 ♘g8**

The knight check on d3 would clearly be pointless.

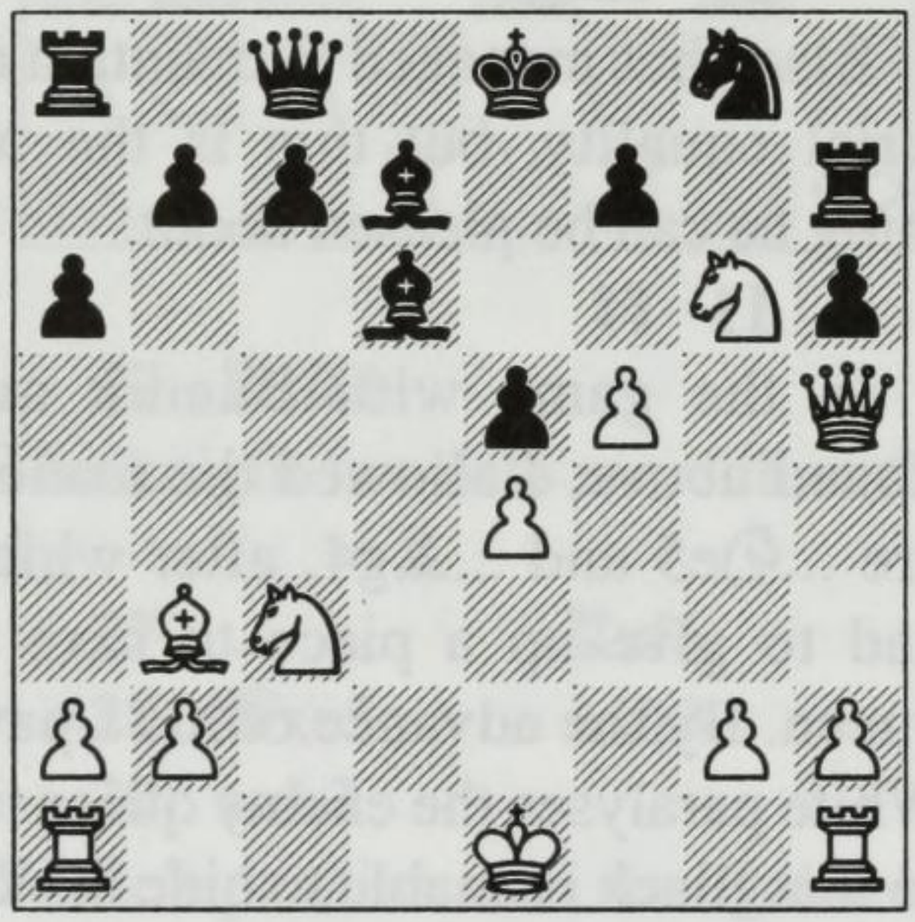
**15 ♗xe5 dxe5**

**16 ♘g6!**

The assessment of the position is not in doubt. White has a decisive positional advantage, and there are at his disposal several ways of strengthening his position: 16 ♘d5, 16 f6, even 16 0-0-0. I think, however, that the text-move is the most energetic solution to the problem. The one relatively passive piece comes into play with decisive effect.

**16 ... ♗d6** *(D)*

In reply to 16...♘f6, 17 ♕h4 decides.




**17 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7**

Or 17...♖xf7 18 ♘h8.

**18 ♘d5!**

The old rule – the threat is stronger than its execution. The knight at g6 is so well placed that even a double check (without any immediate gains) is not enough to persuade it to move.

**18 ... ♔g7**

Now the threat of 19 ♘ge7+ was too serious.

**19 0-0**

The rook comes into play. Against the threat of 20 f6+ Black has just one defence.

**19 ... ♘f6**

**20 ♘xf6 ♔xf6**

**21 ♘xe5!**

Now the g6-square is available to the queen, while for the knight, which has already done so much, another fate is in store. It is clear that Black cannot take it either with the king (22 f6+), or with the bishop (22 ♕g6+).

**21 ... ♕e8**

**22 ♘xd7+**

Time is the main factor in White's attack. His basic aim is to prevent the evacuation of the black king to h8.

**22 ... ♖xd7**

Against 22...♕xd7 the simplest reply is 23 e5+.

**23 e5+**

It does no harm to open the e-file, since, after all, White has also a queen's rook.

**23 ... ♗xe5**

**24 ♕xh6+ ♔f7**

**25 ♖ae1 ♖d5**

**26 ♕h7+ ♔f6**

26...♔f8 loses quickly to 27 f6 ♗d4+ 28 ♔h1 ♕f7 29 ♕h8+ ♕g8 30 ♕h6+, and mates.

**27 ♖e4!**

A perfectly logical move – the rook gains the opportunity to manoeuvre along the fourth rank. At the same

time an interesting tactical idea is involved. Black cannot defend against the threat of 28 ♖g4 by 27...♖d4 on account of 28 ♕h4+. 27...♕f7 loses straight away to 28 ♕h4+ ♔g7 29 f6+! ♔f8 (29...♗xf6 30 ♖g4+) 30 ♕h6+ ♔e8 31 ♕h8+. I was expecting 27...♗xh2+, which involves a curious trap: 28 ♔xh2? ♕xe4 29 ♕g6+ ♔e5 30 ♕e6+ ♔d4 31 ♖d1+ ♔e3! 32 ♖e1+ ♔f2!, and unexpectedly it is Black who threatens mate. The point of White's play was to continue 28 ♔h1!, when the above variation is unacceptable for Black: he simply loses his queen. The move chosen by Letelier leads to an immediate conclusion.

**27 ... ♗d4+**
**28 ♔h1! 1-0**

(28...♕xe4 29 ♕g6+ ♔e5 30 ♕e6 mate).

Game 52
**Tal – Padevsky**
*Moscow 1963*
French Defence

**1 e4 e6**

Padevsky adopts the French Defence comparatively often, and with great success. It is sufficient to recall the game Fischer-Padevsky played in the Varna Olympiad, in which the American Grandmaster gained a draw only with the greatest difficulty. In the Moscow International Tournament the French Defence had brought Padevsky a victory over Kuijpers.

**2 d4 d5**
**3 ♘c3 ♗b4**
**4 e5 b6**

Despite the fact that this system is fairly popular, in my opinion it is hard for Black to obtain any active counterplay. 4...♘e7 or 4...c5 are more promising.

**5 ♕g4 ♗f8**
**6 ♗g5**

In this position Simagin recommends 6 ♘h3 which does not force Black to reply immediately 6...♕d7.

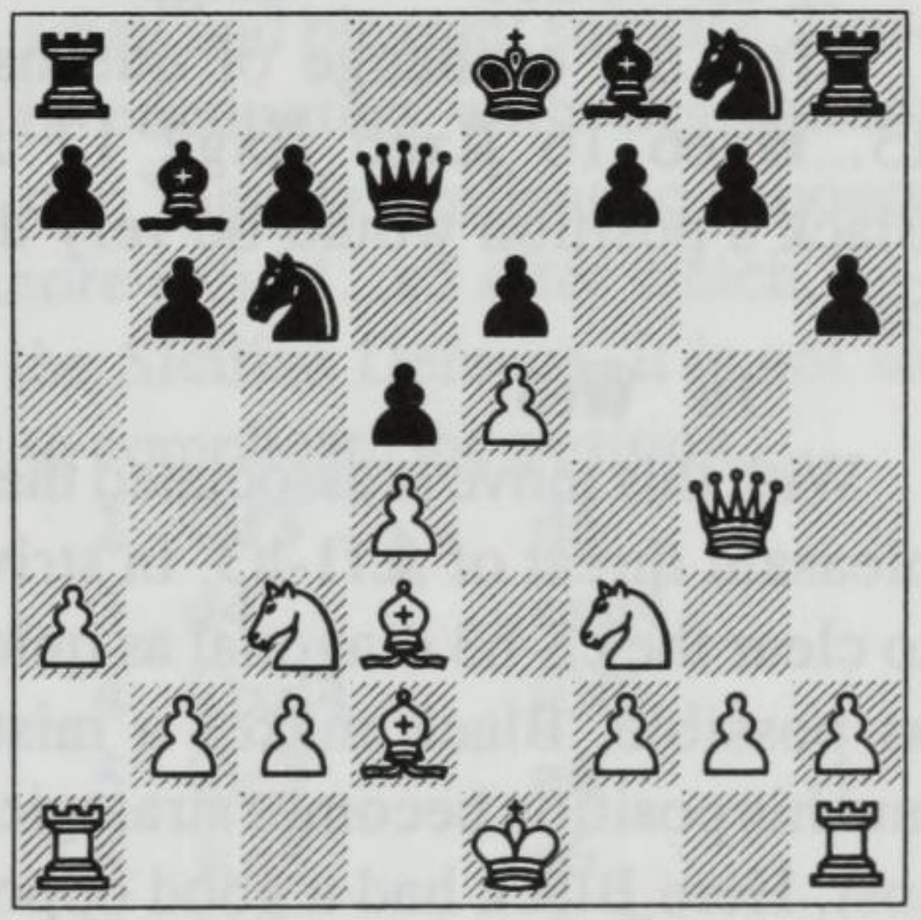
**6 ... ♕d7**

Weaker is 6...♘e7 since after 7 ♗xe7 Black is forced to 'develop' his king (7...♕xe7 8 ♘xd5).

**7 ♘f3 ♘c6**
**8 a3 ♗b7**
**9 ♗d3 h6**
**10 ♗d2** *(D)*

A continuation without great pretensions. More aggressive is 10 ♕h3.

*B*



**10 ... 0-0-0**
**11 h4 ♘ge7**

Stronger is 11...f6 even though in this case also White's position is more

attractive after the continuation 12 0-0-0 fxe5 13 dxe5.

**12 0-0-0 f5**

Padevsky does not like blocked positions. Convinced supporters of the French Defence would no doubt have played here 12...♘f5 13 ♕f4 h5 etc.

**13 exf6 gxf6**

**14 ♖de1!**

The rook on h1 occupies a very strong post. This will become especially clear in the variation which occurs in the game.

**14 ... ♖g8**

The variation 14...f5 15 ♕h5 ♖g8 16 g3 ♖g4 17 ♕f7! naturally does not suit Black; 17...♘xd4 fails to 18 ♘e5! If, in answer to 14...♖g8, White plays 15 ♕h3, then 15...f5 is very strong, since the queen is passively placed on h3. Besides, White has to reckon with the possibility of ...e5.

**15 ♕xe6 ♖xg2**

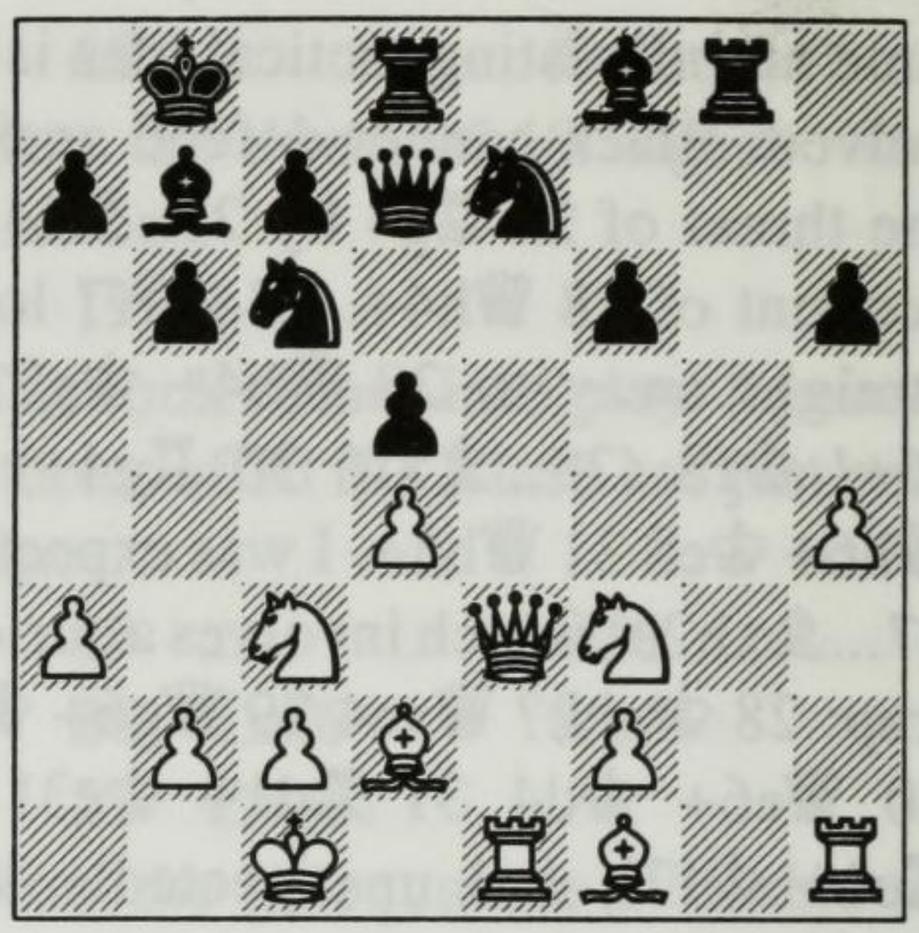
After the exchange of queens by 15...♕xe6 16 ♖xe6 ♖xg2 17 ♗e3 Black's position would be very difficult.

**16 ♕e3**

With this move is associated the unpleasant threat of ♗f1-h3. In striving to clear the c8-h3 diagonal as quickly as possible, Black makes a mistake and his position becomes strategically lost. Here Black had a good opportunity to obtain counterplay by 16...♖g4 17 ♗f1 ♘f5 18 ♕d3 ♘fxd4 19 ♗h3 ♘xf3 20 ♕xf3 f5.

**16 ... ♔b8**

**17 ♗f1 ♖g8** *(D)*




**18 ♗h3 f5**

This was a difficult decision to make, but the intended 18...♘f5 would have lost instantly: 19 ♕d3 ♗c8 20 h5! ♕h7 21 ♘h4.

**19 ♕d3**

Here White could have chosen a positional path: 19 ♖hg1. This would have been followed by 19...♖xg1 20 ♖xg1 f4 21 ♕e6, but I considered the move in the game to be more energetic. Now the black king becomes the object of attack.

**19 ... ♗c8**

**20 h5**

White does not wish to give the black pieces a single gulp of air, and leaves his h-pawn to its fate. The price for it is great enough: the black queen is forced to abandon the defence of her king.

**20 ... ♕e8**

**21 ♗f4 ♕xh5**

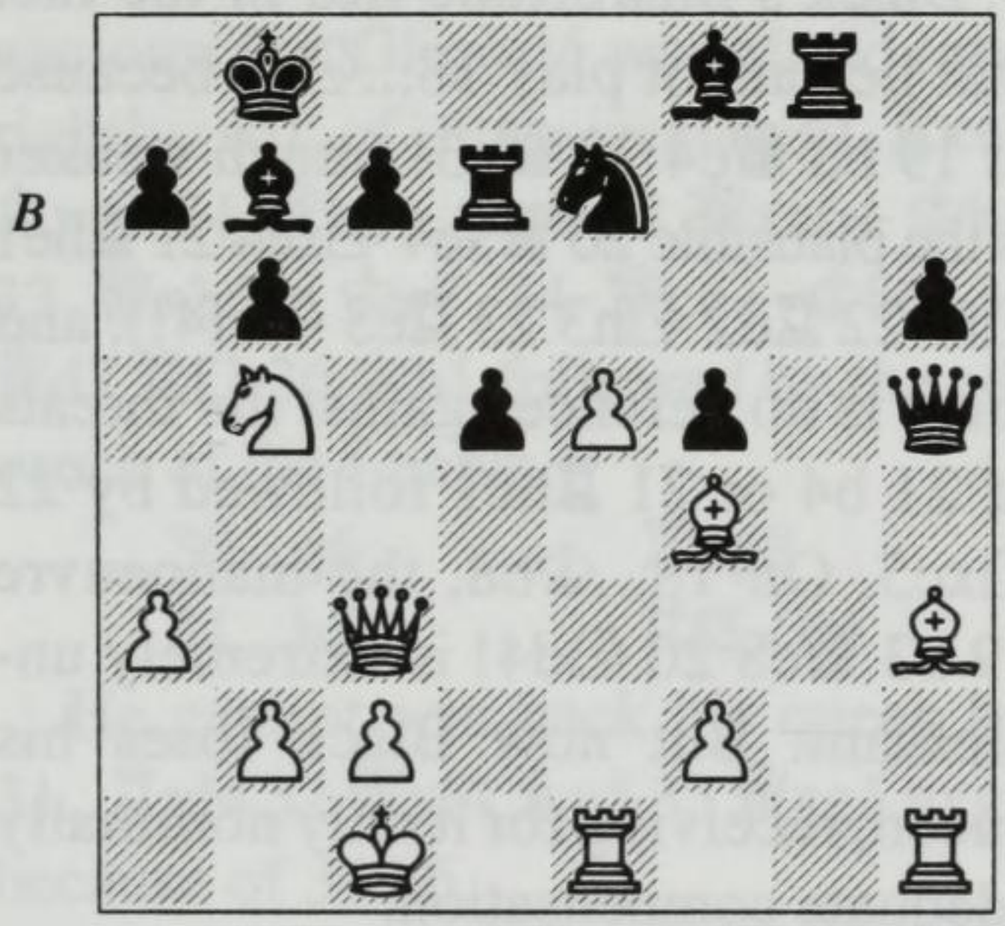
On 21...a6 White replies simply 22 ♗f1 denying his opponent even material satisfaction.

**22 ♘b5 ♖d7**

**23 ♕c3**

The storm clouds are gathering over the c7-square. The positional 24 ♘e5 is threatened. On 23...♗a6 there would follow 24 ♘e5 ♘xe5 25 ♘xc7. After 23...a6, this does not work, since Black plays 25...♘5g6 and White's ferocious discovered check turns out to be harmless. However, the picture has changed somewhat and White would continue 24 ♘xc7 ♖xc7 25 ♖xe7 ♗xe7 26 ♕xc6, finishing up a pawn ahead. Even so, it would appear that Black should have played this, since after ...

**23 ... ♗b7**
**24 ♘e5 ♘xe5**
**25 dxe5** *(D)*




... the pawn also joins the attack, which settles the issue.

**25 ... d4**

25...♗g7 was the only way to prevent 26 e6, but then 26 ♘d4 wins.

**26 e6!**

The pawn on d7 will be more important than the spectator on h5.

**26 ... dxc3**
**27 exd7 ♗g7**
**28 ♘xc7**

The simplest.

**1-0**

In addition to Black's other misfortunes, he had only a minute remaining on his clock. Therefore he was unable to exploit his last chance, 28...♕f3. If White had replied 29 ♗d6, then there was the possibility of 29...cxb2+ 30 ♔b1 ♗e4 31 ♘e8+ ♔b7 32 d8♕?? ♗xc2+ 33 ♔xc2 ♕c3+ 34 ♔b1 ♕d3+ 35 ♔a2 b1♕+. White nevertheless wins by 29 ♘d5+ ♔a8 30 ♗g2! ♕xg2 31 ♘c7+ ♔b8 32 ♘e8+.

## Game 53
## Tal – Gligorić
*Moscow 1963*
Sicilian Defence

**1 e4 c5**

A small and pleasant surprise. Usually in encounters with Grandmasters, our Yugoslav colleague chooses the more solid 1...e5 after which, unlike the Sicilian Defence, it is not so easy to complicate the position.

**2 ♘f3 d6**
**3 d4 cxd4**
**4 ♘xd4 ♘f6**
**5 ♘c3 a6**
**6 ♗g5 e6**
**7 f4 ♗e7**
**8 ♕f3 ♕c7**
**9 0-0-0 ♘bd7**

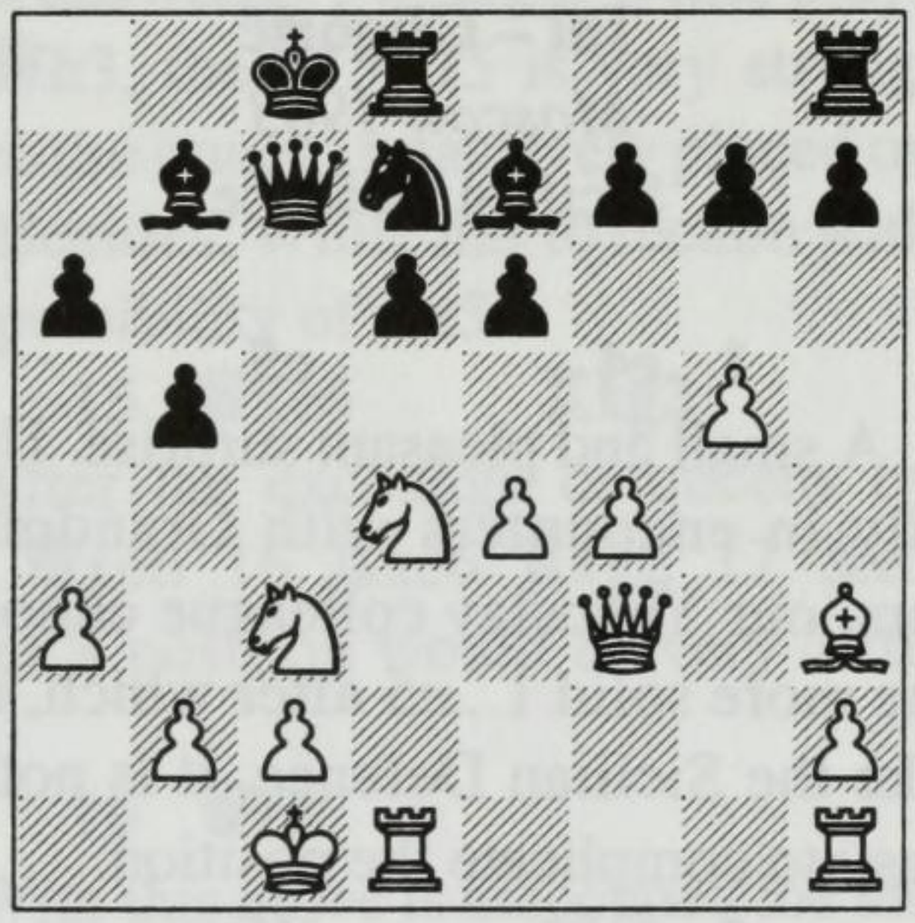
It is interesting to note that up to this game, as far as I know, Gligorić

has preferred to have the white pieces in this line. Particularly well known are his two encounters with Fischer (Candidates Tournament, Yugoslavia 1959).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **10** | **g4** | **b5** |
| **11** | **♗xf6** | **♘xf6** |
| **12** | **g5** | **♘d7** |
| **13** | **a3** | |

Here White thought for about 40 minutes. The fact is that I very much wanted to play a move like 13 ♘f5 but only succeeded in convincing myself that there was a reason why this sacrifice had not been played before.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **13** | **...** | **♗b7** |
| **14** | **♗h3** | **0-0-0** *(D)* |




As far as I know, the 'last word in fashion' in this variation is 14...b4 15 axb4 ♕c4 16 ♖he1 ♖b8 as Cobo played against Matanović (Havana 1962). I was planning to consider here 17 ♘d5!?

After Gligorić's move a position from the first game of the 'Sicilian match' Gligorić-Fischer is reached, where White played 15 f5 ♗xg5+ 16 ♔b1 e5 17 ♘dxb5 and won (though not without American assistance). I think that the continuation chosen by White is more promising.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **15** | **♗xe6** | **fxe6** |
| **16** | **♘xe6** | **♕c4** |

Perhaps 16...♕b6 is more accurate; I would have answered in the same way as in the game.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **17** | **♘d5** | |

Of course, the knight on e6 is much stronger than Black's rook. However, this is not the whole story. Now (and two moves later) the modest b3 is threatened.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **17** | **...** | **♗xd5** |
| **18** | **exd5** | **♔b7** |

Black's misfortune lies in the fact that he cannot play 18...♘c5 because of 19 b3 ♕e4 20 ♕c3! (much weaker is the plausible 20 ♕xe4 ♘xe4 21 ♖he1 ♘f2 22 ♖d2 ♘h3 23 ♖e3 ♘xf4!), and there is no defence against the threats of 21 b4 or 21 ♖he1 followed by 22 ♘xc5. On 18...♔b8, the manoeuvre 19 b3 ♕c8 20 ♘d4! is extremely unpleasant. But now Black loses his queen, receiving for it only nominally adequate compensation.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **19** | **b3** | **♕c8** |
| **20** | **♖d3** | **♘b6** |

Otherwise he cannot untangle his knot of pieces.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **21** | **♖c3** | **♕d7** |
| **22** | **♖c7+** | **♕xc7** |
| **23** | **♘xc7** | **♔xc7** |
| **24** | **♕c3+** | **♔b8** |
| **25** | **♕xg7** | |

One pawn on the kingside is more precious than all the queenside pawns. Here I very much wanted to play 25 ♕c6 but after 25...♘c8 nothing real is promised either by 26 ♕xa6 ♖d7 27 ♕xb5+ ♖b7 (and it is not clear how the armada can be advanced), or by 26 a4 b4 27 ♖e1 ♖hf8 28 ♖e4 ♖xf4! 29 ♖xf4 ♗xg5.

**25 ... ♘c8**
**26 ♖e1 ♖dg8**

If Black tries to activate his pieces by 26...♖hg8 27 ♕xh7 ♖h8 then 28 ♖xe7 decides.

**27 ♕d4 ♗d8**
**28 ♖e6 ♖f8**
**29 h4 h6**

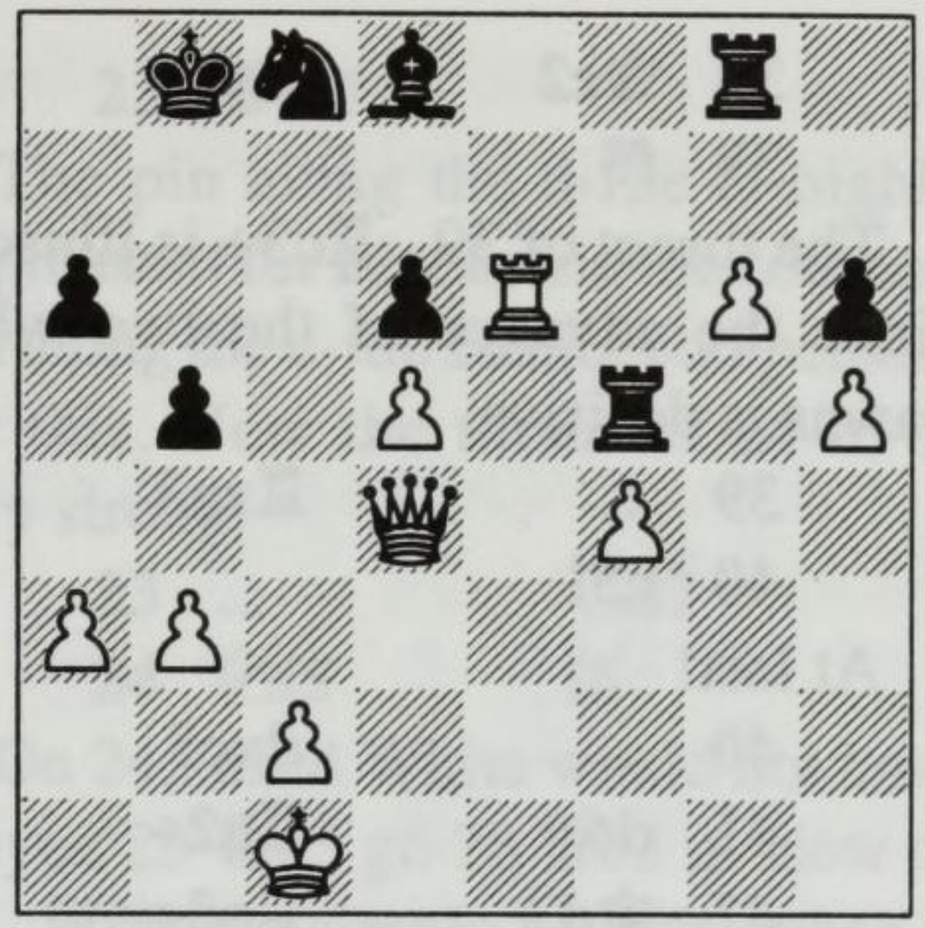
The smothering 30 f5 was threatened. Perhaps 29...♘e7 was more tenacious, but Gligorić was afraid (and rightly so) of the simple 30 ♖xe7 ♗xe7 31 ♕b6+ ♔c8 32 ♕xa6+ ♔b8 33 ♕xb5+ ♔c7 34 ♕c6+ ♔b8 35 ♕d7 ♖f7 36 ♔b1 followed by the advance of the f-pawn.

**30 g6 ♖hg8**
**31 h5 ♖f5** *(D)*

He cannot win back his queen by 31...♖xf4 32 ♕xf4 ♗g5 33 ♕xg5 hxg5 because of 34 h6.

**32 ♕e4 ♖xh5**

Black very resourcefully seizes on the slightest chance of complicating the game. I would have liked to have concluded the game with the variation 32...♖ff8 33 f5 ♗f6 34 ♖xf6! ♖xf6 35 ♕e6! ♖xe6 36 dxe6 and the three




white pawns defeat the black pieces on their own[1].

**33 ♖e8 ♖xe8**
**34 ♕xe8 ♗f6**
**35 c4!**

The c-pawn will have the deciding word. Bad was the automatic 35 ♕f7 ♗c3 36 ♔d1 ♖h2! 37 g7 ♖d2+ 38 ♔c1 ♖e2.

The point of the text is not merely that White's king is out of danger – the threat of 36 c5 is extremely unpleasant, for example: 35...♖f5 36 c5 ♖xd5 37 c6.

**35 ... bxc4**
**36 bxc4 ♖h3**
**37 ♔d2**

I had no wish to delve into the theoretical maze after 37 ♕f7 ♗d4 38 g7 ♖c3+ 39 ♔d2 ♗xg7 40 ♕xg7 ♖xc4 41 f5 ♖c5 42 f6 ♖xd5+ 43 ♔e3 ♘b6 44 f7 ♘d7 45 f8♕+ ♘xf8 46 ♕xf8+ ♔c7. After the text, the threat of 38 c5 is once again on the agenda.

**37 ... ♗c3+**

---

1 I do not see how the pawns can advance after 36...♘e7 37 f6 ♘f5.

**38 ♔c2 ♗d4**
**39 f5**

The threat of 39...♖c3+ is illusory, since the advance of the two white pawns is decisive.

**39 ... ♖xa3**
**40 c5!**

At last!

**40 ... dxc5**
**41 d6 ♖a2+**
**42 ♔d3 ♖a3+**
**43 ♔c4 1-0**

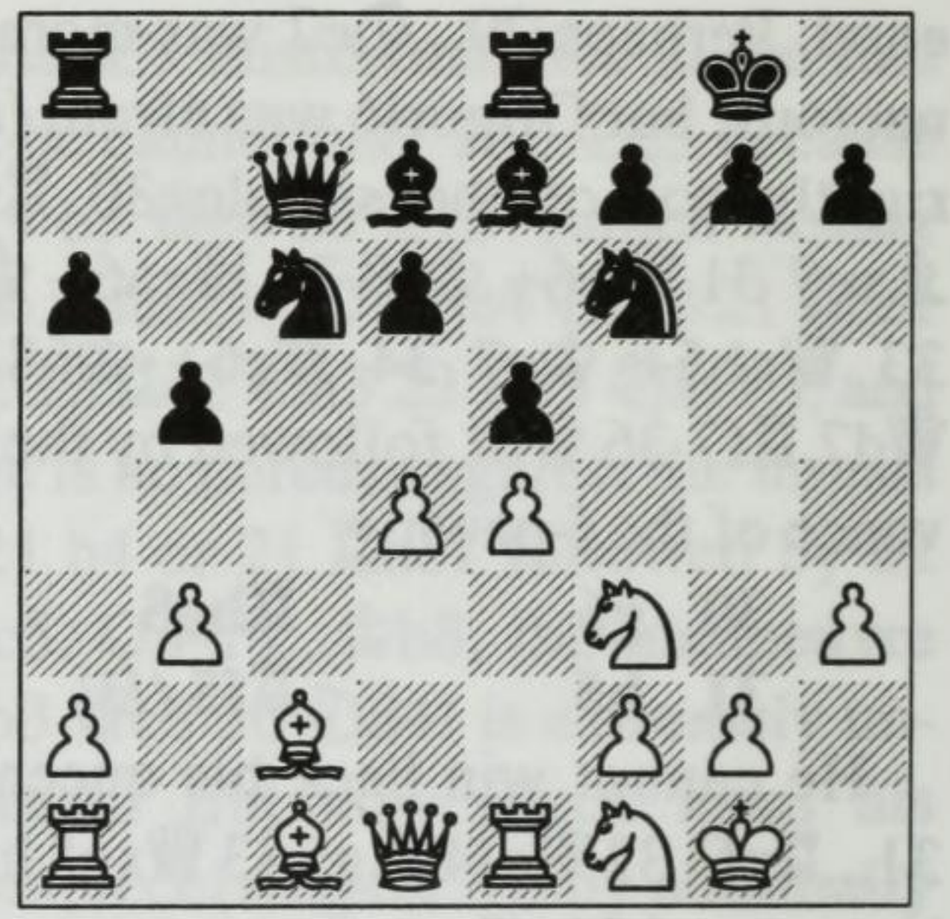
Game 54
**Tal – Gligorić**
*Reykjavik 1964*
Ruy Lopez

**1 e4 e5**
**2 ♘f3 ♘c6**
**3 ♗b5 a6**
**4 ♗a4 ♘f6**
**5 0-0 ♗e7**
**6 ♖e1 b5**
**7 ♗b3 d6**
**8 c3 0-0**
**9 h3 ♘a5**
**10 ♗c2 c5**
**11 d4 ♕c7**
**12 ♘bd2 ♗d7**
**13 ♘f1 ♖fe8**
**14 b3**

This variation of Black's, introduced into tournament practice by Smyslov, has been practically monopolised by Yugoslav players. Grandmasters Gligorić, Ivkov and Matanović have successfully adopted this system over a period of almost ten years. When Geller, during the Havana International Tournament, was preparing for his game with Ivkov, we began to analyse the move 14 b3 which, strange as it may seem, turned out to be a theoretical innovation. The effect of it was startling. In Havana Geller won against Ivkov, in Moscow I defeated Matanović and in Reykjavik Gligorić himself became the victim of this variation. Evidently the variation is not at all bad for White.

**14 ... cxd4**
**15 cxd4 ♘c6** *(D)*

Gligorić seeks new paths, but it becomes clear that this move also does not give Black equality.




**16 ♗b2**

After 16 ♘e3 ♘xd4 17 ♘xd4 exd4 18 ♕xd4 d5! Black's idea would justify itself.

**16 ... ♘xd4**
**17 ♘xd4 exd4**
**18 ♖c1**

The threat of 19 e5 wins White an important tempo.

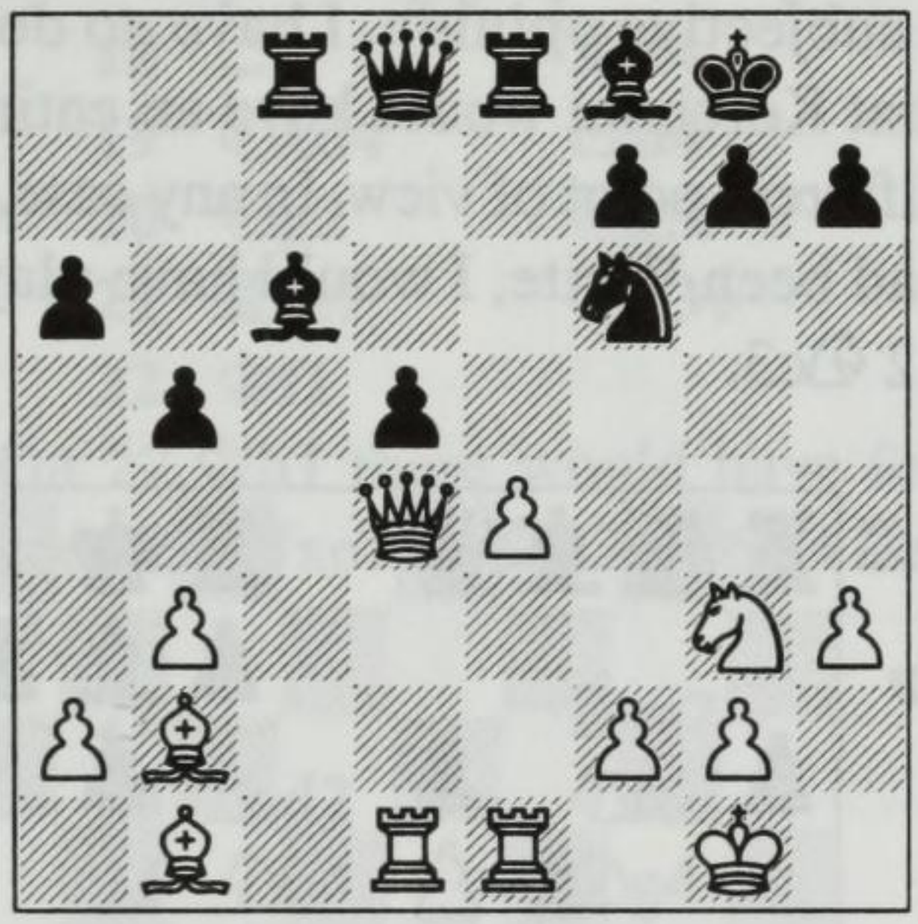
**18 ... ♕d8**
**19 ♕xd4 ♗f8**

19...♖c8 was better, when White is unable to carry out the manoeuvre which occurs in the game.

**20 ♖cd1**

White readily concedes to his opponent the open c-file, which Black is unable to put to any real advantage, and intensifies the pressure along the central files.

**20 ... ♖c8**
**21 ♗b1 ♗c6**
**22 ♘g3 d5** *(D)*




It is very difficult for Black to find a satisfactory plan. Therefore Gligorić attempts, at the cost of a pawn, to take play into an ending where he would have quite good drawing chances. For example: 23 e5 ♘e4 24 ♘xe4 dxe4 25 ♗xe4 ♕xd4 26 ♖xd4 ♗xe4 27 ♖dxe4 ♖c2. White is naturally not satisfied by such a transformation of his big positional advantage, and attempts to exploit his attacking possibilities in the middlegame.

**23 ♕e3!**

The pin along the d-file is highly unpleasant for Black, and the counter-pin along the e-file cannot compensate for this. Now the threat of 24 e5 is very strong.

**23 ... ♘d7**
**24 ♘f5 f6**

On 24...dxe4 White would not have played 25 ♕g3 g6 26 ♕c3 in view of 26...♕f6! but simply 25 ♕f4, when it is very difficult for Black to free himself from the pin since 25...♕c7 fails to 26 ♘h6+.

**25 ♕g3 ♕c7**
**26 ♕g4**

The storm clouds are gathering. All the white pieces are eyeing the enemy king in far from friendly fashion. Now 26...dxe4 27 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 loses to 28 ♘h6+ and 29 ♖xd7. Gligorić decides to give up the exchange, so as at least to check White's expansion.

**26 ... ♘e5**
**27 ♗xe5 ♖xe5**
**28 ♘h6+**

Nothing was gained by 28 exd5 ♖xe1+ 29 ♖xe1 ♗xd5 30 ♖e7 (30 ♘h6+ ♔h8 31 ♕f5 gxh6) 30...♕c1+ 31 ♔h2 ♕g5!

**28 ... ♔h8**
**29 ♘f7+ ♕xf7**
**30 ♕xc8 ♗b7**
**31 ♕c3!**

The possibility of winning Black's queen by 31 ♕b8 ♖e8 32 ♕f4 ♕e6 33 exd5 ♕xe1+ 34 ♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 35 ♔h2 ♖e5 (but not 35...♖xb1 36 ♕b8) did not appeal to me. Now Black wins a

pawn, but the activity of White's heavy pieces assures him of the win.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **31** | **...** | **b4** |
| **32** | **♕c1** | **dxe4** |
| **33** | **♖d8** | **g5** |

It is already difficult to suggest anything for Black.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **34** | **♕d2** | **♗c6** |
| **35** | **♕d6!** | |

On 35 ♕xb4 there would have followed 35...♔g7 when White has to retreat. Now, however, Black's position collapses instantly.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **35** | **...** | **♗e8** |
| **36** | **♕b8** | **♔g7** |
| **37** | **♖xe4** | **♖b5** |
| **38** | **♕a8** | **♗d7** |
| **39** | **♗d3** | **♖d5** |
| **40** | **♖xf8** | **1-0** |

## Game 55

## Torbergsson – Tal

*Reykjavik 1964*

King's Indian Defence

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **d4** | **♘f6** |
| **2** | **c4** | **g6** |
| **3** | **♘c3** | **♗g7** |
| **4** | **e4** | **0-0** |
| **5** | **f4** | **d6** |
| **6** | **♘f3** | **c5** |
| **7** | **d5** | **e6** |
| **8** | **♗e2** | **exd5** |
| **9** | **exd5** | |

During this encounter I remembered a game from the Latvia-Georgia match (3rd USSR Peoples' Spartakiad), in which Rozhlapa played in this variation 9...b5, and convincingly defeated International Master Tchaikovskaya. So naturally there followed the move ...

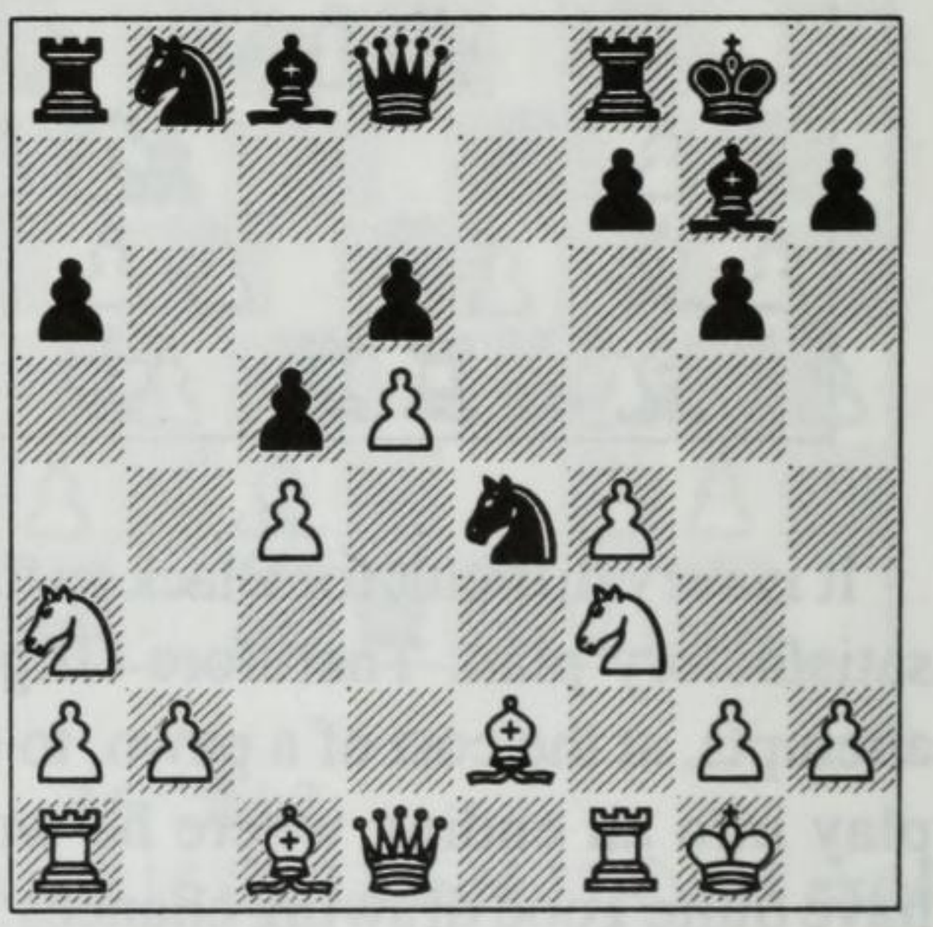
| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **9** | **...** | **b5!?** |
| **10** | **♘xb5** | |

In my opinion, 10 cxb5 gives White excellent prospects.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **10** | **...** | **♘e4** |
| **11** | **0-0** | **a6** |
| **12** | **♘a3** *(D)* | |

This then is the idea behind Black's sacrifice. White's knight on a3 occupies a most unfavourable post, and Black has time to concentrate his forces in the centre. This, of course, is a subjective opinion. I have no doubt that Korchnoi would have an entirely different point of view. In any case, if I had been White, I would have played 12 ♘c3.

*B*



| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **12** | **...** | **♖a7!** |

This also occurred in the Tchaikovskaya-Rozhlapa game. Black finds a clear road to transfer his rook to the centre.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **13** | **♗d3** | **♖e7** |

**14 ♘c2 ♖fe8**
**15 ♖e1**

Now it becomes obvious that White has difficulties over the development of his queenside.

**15 ... ♘d7**
**16 ♘e3 ♘df6**
**17 ♕c2 ♘h5**

White has not succeeded in finding a better plan, and is already forced to meet concrete threats.

**18 g3**

This move is a great success – for Black. However, 18 ♘f1 would be answered very strongly by 18...♘g5!

**18 ... ♗d4**
**19 ♘xd4 cxd4**
**20 ♘g2 ♘g5!**
**21 ♖xe7 ♘h3+**
**22 ♔f1**

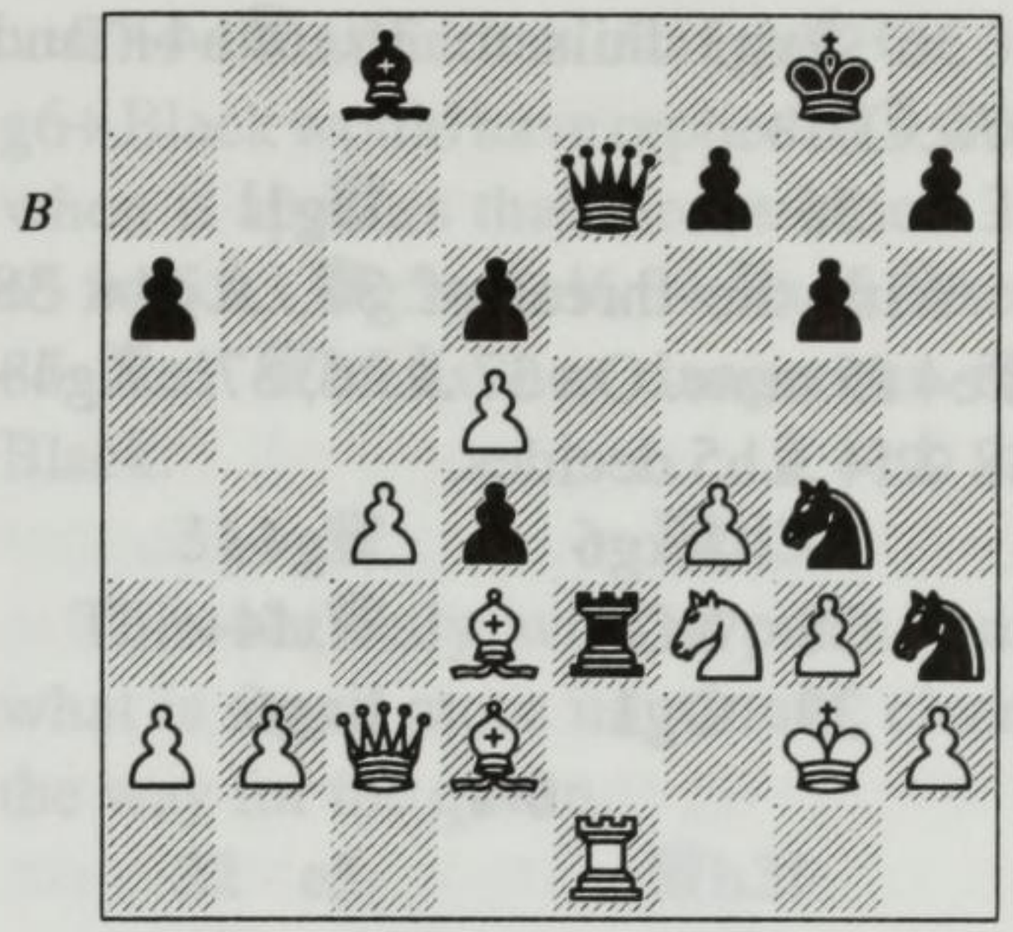
On 22 ♔h1 there would have followed 22...♕xe7 23 ♗d2 ♘f6 24 ♖e1 ♘g4.

**22 ... ♖xe7**
**23 ♗d2 ♘f6**
**24 ♘h4 ♘g4**
**25 ♘f3**

Against 25 ♔g2 Black had prepared the following variation: 25...♕e8 26 f5 ♖e2+ 27 ♗xe2 ♕xe2+ 28 ♔xh3 h5 29 ♖h1 ♘f2+ 30 ♔g2 ♘xh1+.

**25 ... ♖e3**
**26 ♔g2 ♕e7**
**27 ♖e1** *(D)*

Here Black can carry out one of two interesting combinations. I spent a long time considering 27...♖xe1 28 ♘xe1 ♗f5 29 ♘f3 ♕e3 30 ♗xe3 ♘xe3+ 31 ♔h1 ♗xd3! 32 ♕d2 ♗e4 33 ♕e2 g5 34 g4 h5 and wins. Unfortunately, the combination is not forced. After 29 ♕d1 I could not see a way to win[1].



*B*

**27 ... ♘xf4+!**
**28 gxf4 ♖xe1**
**29 ♘xe1 ♕h4**
**30 ♗c1**

Clearly the only move.

**30 ... ♕xe1**
**31 h3**

This loses very quickly, but also after the superior 31 f5 ♘e5 Black's attack is irresistible.

**31 ... ♘h6!**
**32 f5 ♘xf5**
**33 ♗f4**

Now there comes the concluding combination.

**33 ... ♘h4+**
**34 ♔h2 ♘f3+**
**35 ♔g2 ♗xh3+!**
**36 ♔xf3**

---

1 29 ♕d1 ♕e3 30 ♔xh3 ♕g1 does the trick.

36 ♔xh3 fails to 36...♕h4+ and 37...♘e1+.

**36 ... ♕g1!**

With the threat of 37...♗g4+ 38 ♔e4 f5 mate. On 37 ♗h6, 37...♗g4+ 38 ♔f4 ♗h5 decides.

**37 ♗xg6 ♕g4+**
**38 ♔f2 ♕xf4+**
**39 ♔g1 hxg6**
**0-1**

Game 56

**Olafsson – Tal**

*Reykjavik 1964*

Réti Opening

**1 c4 ♘f6**
**2 g3 c6**

Black chooses the solid Lasker system.

**3 ♘f3 d5**
**4 b3 ♗f5**
**5 ♗g2 e6**
**6 0-0 ♗e7**
**7 ♗b2 0-0**
**8 d3 h6**
**9 ♘bd2 a5**
**10 a3 ♘bd7**

More precise was 10...♘a6 so as to deny White the possibility of playing b4. After 11 ♗c3 ♗h7 12 ♕c1 b5 Black would have an equal position.

**11 ♗c3**

Now White threatens to gain an advantage by advancing b4, and so I was forced, if one can so express it, to change the record.

**11 ... c5**
**12 ♖e1 d4**
**13 ♗b2 ♕c7**
**14 h3 e5**
**15 e4 ♗e6**

The character of the position has changed. Now it resembles a King's Indian set-up with colours reversed.

**16 ♘h4 g6**
**17 ♗c1 ♘h7**
**18 ♘df3 ♘g5**
**19 ♘h2**

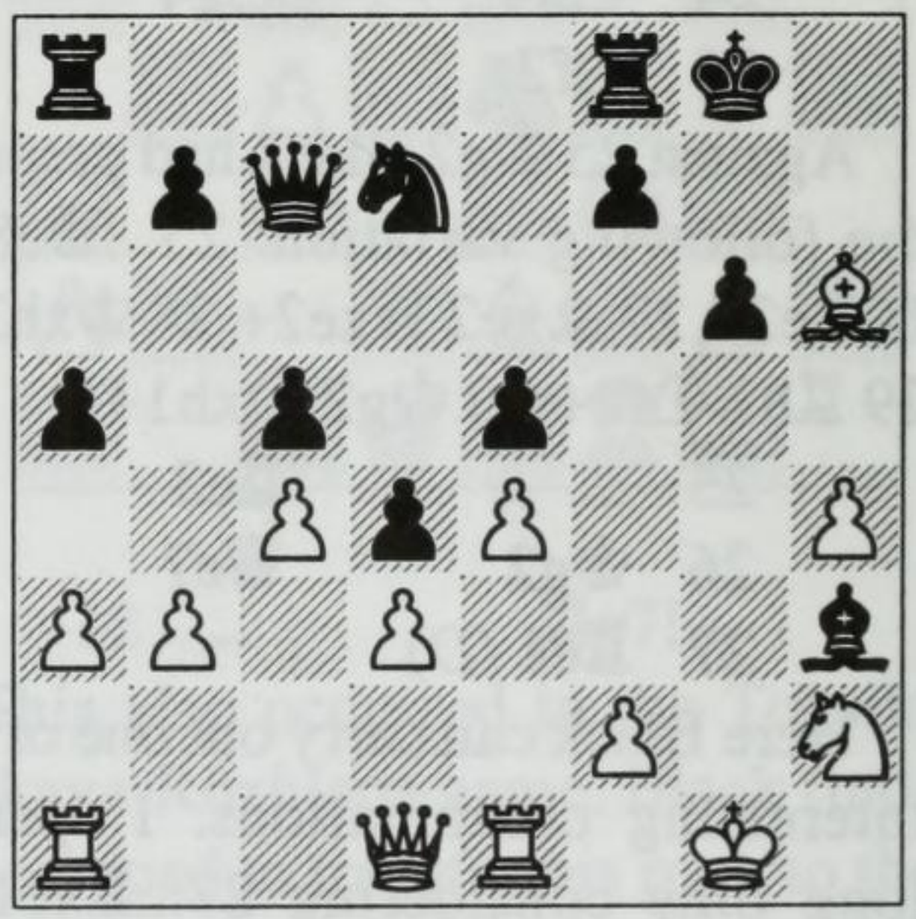
Olafsson tries to create complications. Against the tempting move 19...h5 he has prepared a highly unpleasant reply: 20 ♘f5. At this point I forgot about my peaceful intentions, and a full-scale battle develops over the board.

**19 ... ♘xh3+**
**20 ♗xh3 ♗xh3**
**21 ♗xh6 ♗xh4**

21...♖fe8 is dangerous for Black after 22 ♘f5.

**22 gxh4** *(D)*

22 ♗xf8 fails to 22...♗g5 23 ♘f3 ♗g4.



*B*

**22 ... ♕d8**

**23 ♗g5**

On 23 ♗xf8 there would follow 23...♕xh4 when Black would have the opportunity of posting his knight at f4.

**23 ... f6**

**24 ♗d2 ♔f7!**

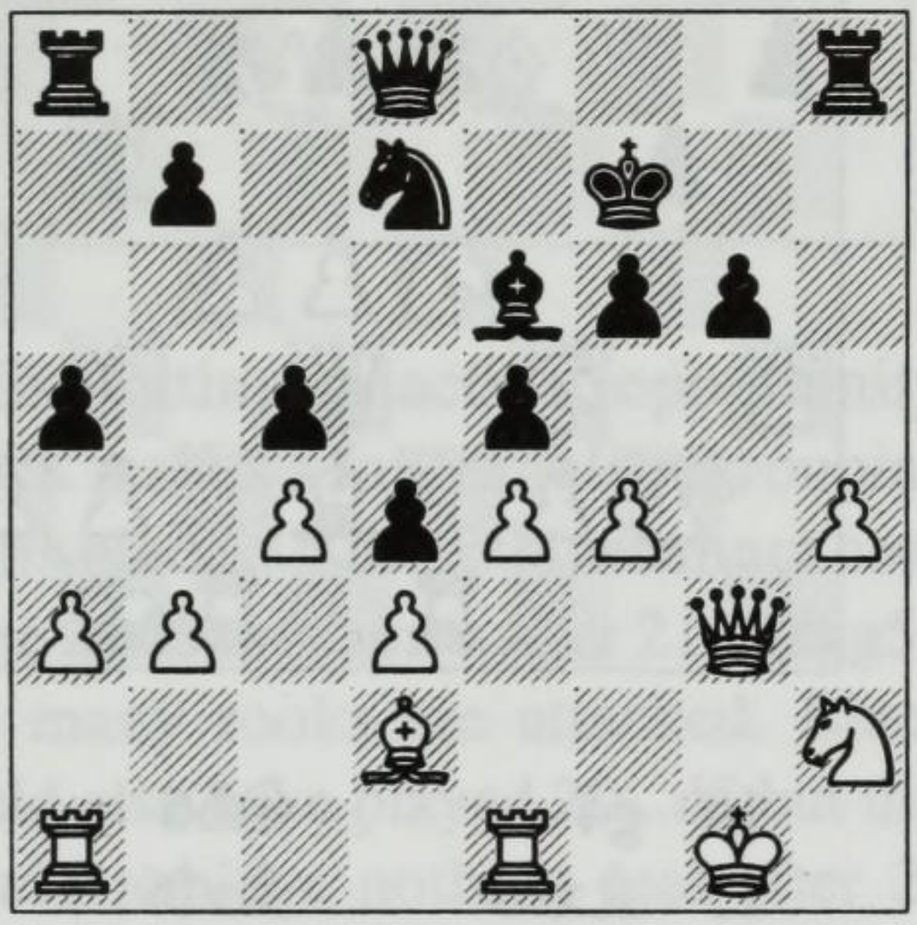
Black's king position is compromised, and he must do all he can to create counterplay.

**25 ♕f3 ♗e6**

**26 ♕g3 ♖h8**

**27 f4** *(D)*

White begins ...



*B*

**27 ... exf4**

**28 ♗xf4 g5!**

... and Black replies. At this point White was already in severe time-trouble.

**29 hxg5 ♖h3**

**30 ♕g2**

30 g6+ was stronger. On 30...♔g7 31 ♕g2 ♕h8, 32 e5 is very unpleasant for Black, so instead of 31...♕h8 I would have played 31...♘e5.

**30 ... ♕h8**

**31 ♖f1**

The situation has changed. On 31 g6+ Black would have replied 31...♔e7 when it appears that the variation 32 e5 fxe5 33 ♕g5+ ♔d6 34 ♖xe5 ♘xe5 35 ♖e1 ♕h5 is not dangerous for Black.

**31 ... ♖xd3**

This not only wins a pawn, but, what is much more important, clears the way for the queen.

**32 e5 ♕h3!**

**33 g6+**

In view of his numerous weaknesses on the queenside, the ending would be very difficult for White.

**33 ... ♔g8**

Not, of course, 33...♔g7 on which there would follow 34 exf6+ ♘xf6 35 ♕xb7+ and 36 ♕xa8.

**34 ♕xb7**

34 exf6 fails to 34...♕xg2+ 35 ♔xg2 ♗h3+ when, in addition to the exchange, Black picks up one of his opponent's passed pawns.

**34 ... ♖b8**

**35 ♕c6 fxe5**

**36 ♖ae1 ♖dxb3!**

Now Black threatens 37...♖3b6, winning a piece.

**37 ♖f3**

It is very difficult for White to meet his opponent's numerous threats. In addition, he had literally only seconds left on his clock.

**37 ... ♖xf3**

**38 ♕xf3**

A mistake. But after 38 ♘xf3 Black still wins easily by continuing, say, 38...♖f8.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **38** | **...** | **exf4** |
| **39** | **♕e4** | **♖e8** |

**0-1**

Game 57

**Evans – Tal**

*Amsterdam Interzonal, 1964*

Sicilian Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **c5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **e6** |
| **3** | **♘c3** | **a6** |
| **4** | **♗e2** | **b5** |

Apparently a slight deviation from theory. Sooner or later a theoretical position is bound to arise, since White cannot get by without d4.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **5** | **d4** | **cxd4** |
| **6** | **♘xd4** | **♗b7** |
| **7** | **a3** | **♕c7** |
| **8** | **0-0** | |

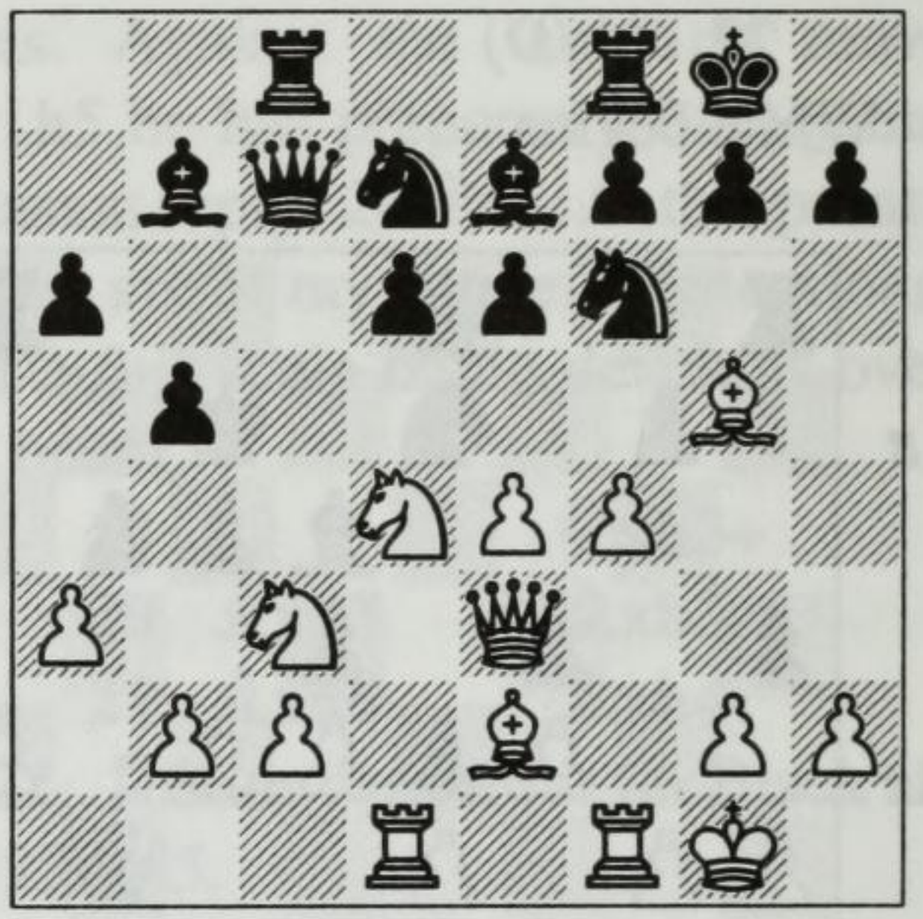
After this natural move Black has no opening difficulties at all. Much more active is 8 f4 since in this position castling can be delayed. Incidentally, the move 8 f4 is not new; for instance, in the game Hort-Tal (Moscow 1963) there followed 8 f4, and after 8...b4 9 axb4 ♗xb4 White had at his disposal a very promising pawn sacrifice in 10 ♖a4.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **8** | **...** | **♘f6** |
| **9** | **♕d3** | |

This shows the first drawback to White's set-up. Had he played 8 f4, he could now have followed with the strong move 9 ♗f3.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **9** | **...** | **d6** |
| **10** | **♗g5** | **♘bd7** |
| **11** | **♕e3** | **♗e7** |
| **12** | **♖ad1** | **0-0** |
| **13** | **f4** | **♖ac8** *(D)* |

Rather routine play. After Evans's reply g4, which Black himself had provoked, I had no doubt that 13...♖fe8 would have been more prudent. In this case, on 14 g4 there could have followed 14...e5 intending to meet 15 ♘f5 by 15...♗f8.




| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **14** | **g4** | **♘b6** |
| **15** | **♗xf6** | **♗xf6** |
| **16** | **g5** | **♗xd4** |

Unfortunately Black is forced to exchange this strong bishop, since after 16...♗e7 17 f5 e5 18 ♘b3! (otherwise 18...d5) 18...♘c4 19 ♗xc4 bxc4 20 f6 cxb3 21 fxe7 ♕xe7 22 cxb3 White has a positional advantage.

Black could, in this variation, attempt to win a piece: 18...d5 19 exd5 ♘c4 20 ♗xc4 bxc4 21 f6 ♗d6 but after 22 fxg7 and 23 ♘e4 White's attack is too dangerous.

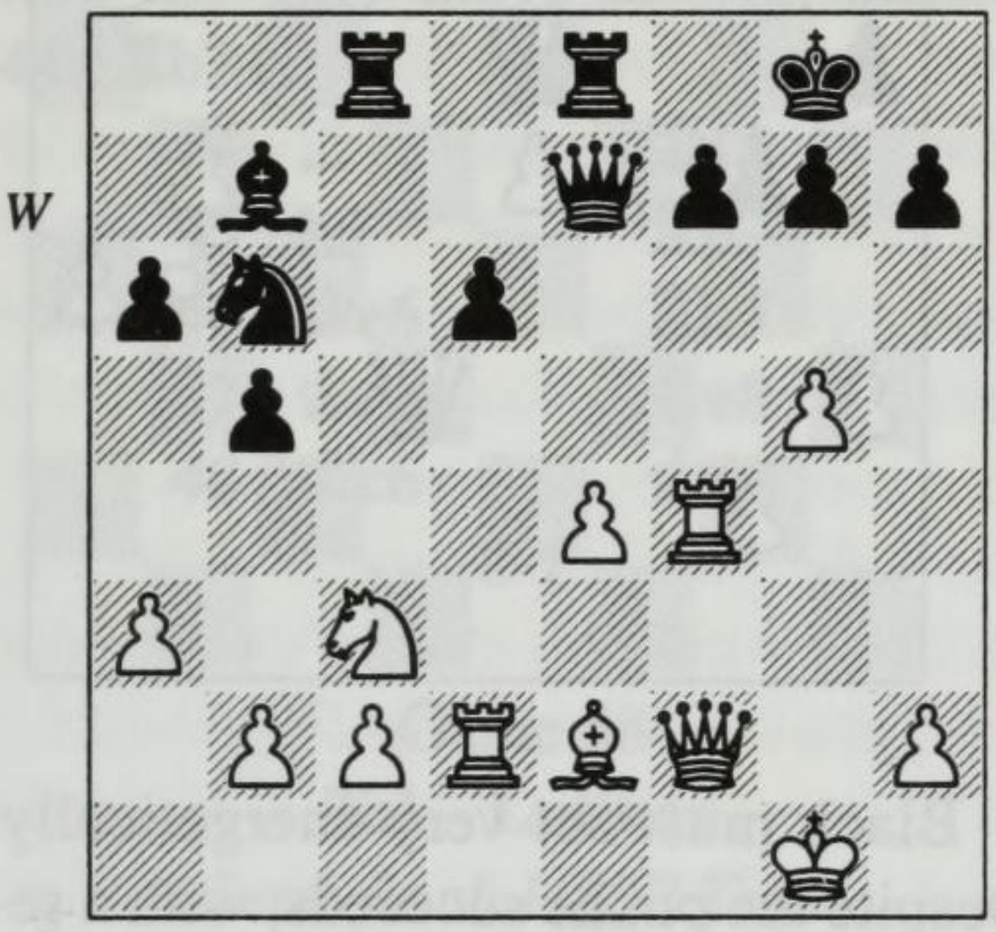
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **17** | **♖xd4** | **e5** |
| **18** | **♖d2** | **exf4** |

**19 ♖xf4**

On 19 ♕xf4 White did not like 19...♕c5+ followed by ...b4.

**19 ... ♖fe8**

**20 ♕f2 ♕e7!** *(D)*




Exploiting a tactical opportunity, Black makes a favourable regrouping of his pieces. Now White cannot continue 21 ♕xb6, since after 21...♕xg5+ too many rooks are attacked. Black could also have played 20...d5 but this would achieve nothing real after 21 exd5 ♘xd5 22 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 23 ♖xd5 ♖xe2 24 ♕xe2 ♕xf4 25 c3.

**21 h4 ♘c4**

**22 ♗xc4 ♖xc4**

**23 ♖d4 ♖ec8**

**24 ♖xc4 ♖xc4**

**25 ♕a7**

Now a tactical battle begins. As a result of the previous play, Black has gained a significant positional advantage. White has insufficient pieces left for an attack, while in addition he has to reckon with the weakness of his e-pawn and his king. White must therefore strive for complications.

**25 ... ♕d7**

**26 ♔f2**

With the idea of moving the king over to the queenside at the first opportunity. Black does not wish to allow this, and he himself opens the game up, which leads to the white pieces becoming active.

**26 ... d5?!**

**27 ♘xd5**

27 ♖f5 was a very interesting move, which could have led to the following variation: 27...dxe4 28 ♖d5 e3+ 29 ♔e1 ♕c7 30 ♕xe3! ♗c6 with a very sharp position.

**27 ... ♖xc2+**

**28 ♔g3 ♖c8**

**29 ♖f6**

Once again cleverly played, avoiding a trap: on the tempting 29 h5 there would have followed 29...♖d8 30 h6 ♗xd5 31 ♕d4 ♕h3+.

After the text-move I was longing to sacrifice a piece by 29...♖e8 30 ♖b6 h5[1], but after 31 ♖xb7 (not 31 gxh6 in view of 31...♖xe4) 31...♕g4+ 32 ♔f2 ♕xh4+ 33 ♔f1 I did not see how I could strengthen my attack. 33...♖xe4 fails to 34 ♖b8+ and then 35 ♘f6+.

**29 ... ♖a8**

**30 ♕c5 ♖d8**

**31 ♖b6**

Here Evans offered me a draw. On 31 ♘e7+ there would have followed

---

1 After 30...♖xe4 White can resign.

31...♔h8 32 ♖xf7 ♕d3+ 33 ♖f3 ♕xe4 34 ♘c6 ♖g8 or 34...♕e1+[1].

**31 ... ♗xd5**
**32 exd5 ♕f5**
**33 ♕d6**

This continuation apparently forces a draw, but the position is not as simple as it looks. If after 33 ♖xa6 Black were to continue 33...h5 34 gxh6 ♖xd5? then a piquant finish could occur: 35 ♖a8+ ♔h7 36 ♖h8+ ♔g6 37 ♕c6+ ♔h5 38 hxg7 mate. Instead of 34...♖xd5 Black can play 34...♕d3+ and 35...♖e8 with a win. White had drawing chances after 33 ♕c7, when Black has nothing better than to give a few checks and then capture on d5 (...♕xd5) so as on ♖b8 to reply ...♖f8 with a slightly better queen ending.

**33 ... ♕d3+**
**34 ♔g2 ♕c2+**
**35 ♔g3 ♕b3+**

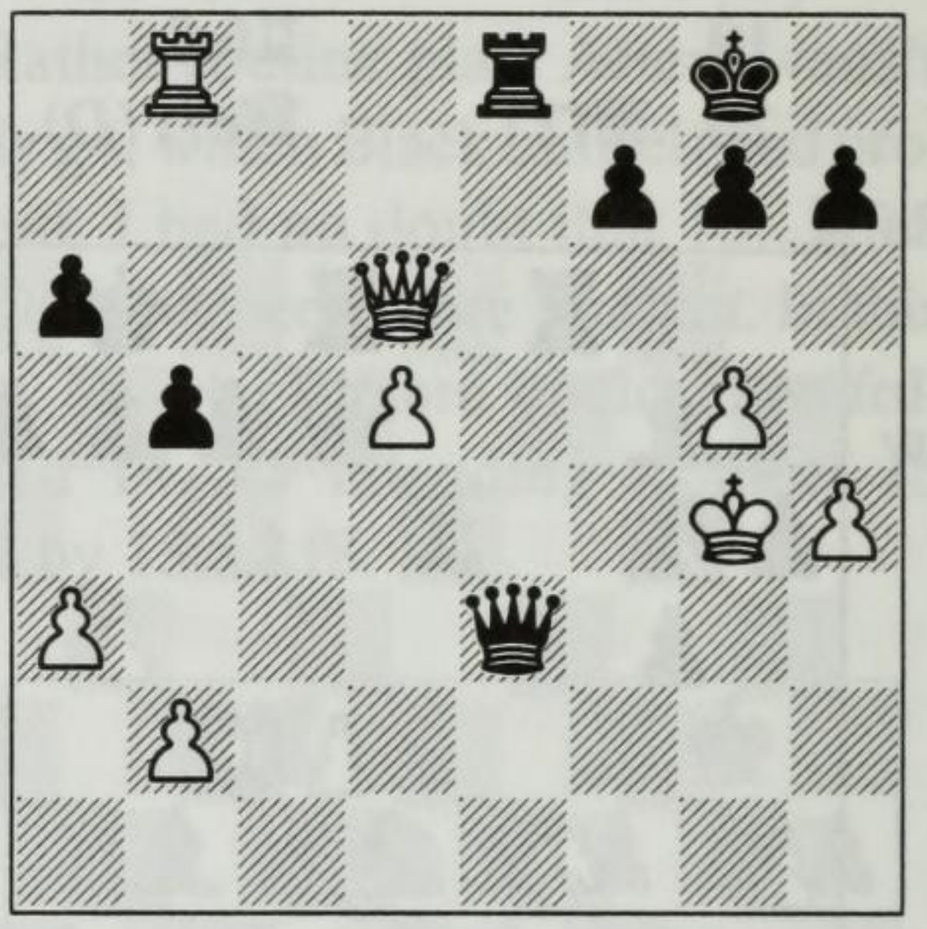
Now 36 ♔g4 loses to 36...h5+ or 36...f5+. If the king retreats to the second rank Black captures the b-pawn, and then with checks returns his queen to c8.

**36 ♔f4 ♖e8**
**37 ♖b8**

The decisive mistake, after which White loses quickly. Evans overlooks a combinative possibility for Black, but even after the superior 37 ♕e5 ♕c4+ 38 ♔g3 ♕c8 39 ♕d4 g6! it is difficult for White to meet the numerous threats, for example 40 d6 ♕c1 41 d7 ♖e3+.

**37 ... ♕e3+**
**38 ♔g4** *(D)*

B



Black must act very energetically. Despite the pin he succeeds, with a series of checks, in exploiting the unfortunate position of the white king.

**38 ... f5+!**

It is interesting to note that here there was a false trail, namely 38...h5+? The difference soon becomes apparent.

**39 gxf6 h5+**
**40 ♔xh5**

Obviously the only move.

**40 ... ♕f3+**
**41 ♔g5**

If 41 ♔g6, then 41...♕g4 mate.

**41 ... ♕xf6+**
**42 ♕xf6 gxf6+**
**43 ♔xf6 ♖xb8**

Now let us see what would have happened after 38...h5+ 39 gxh6 f5+ 40 ♔xf5 ♕f3+ 41 ♔g5 ♕f6+ 42 ♕xf6 gxf6+ 43 ♔xf6 ♖xb8. White still has

---

1 34...♕e1+ is more convincing, since 34...♖g8 35 ♘e5! defends.

his pawn on h6 and he even wins by 44 d6[1].

In the game there followed ...

**44 d6**

On 44 ♔e7 Black would have had to find the only move to win, namely 44...♖b7+.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **44** | **...** | **♔f8** |
| **45** | **h5** | **♖b7** |
| **46** | **♔e6** | **♖h7** |
| **47** | **♔d5** | **♔e8** |
| **48** | **♔c6** | **♔d8** |

**0-1**

Game 58

**Tal – Lutikov**

*Semi-final, USSR Team Championship 1964*

Queen's Pawn Counter-Gambit

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **e5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **d5** |

The sharp, impulsive play of my opponent has gained him widespread popularity in chess circles, but on this occasion (whether or not with the aim of maintaining his reputation) he chooses an over-sharp continuation. Perhaps the fact that Lutikov had been successful in our previous encounters played a certain role in the choice of this variation, together with the considerable psychological effect of the novelty. Indeed, I had never previously encountered in tournament practice the position after Black's 2nd move. White's first task was at least to remember the name of this opening. At the board I did not succeed in solving this problem. The second was to recall any games previously played with this variation. With this second problem I coped rather more successfully. There flashed through my mind the encounter between Boleslavsky and Lilienthal (Match-Tournament for the title of Absolute Champion of the USSR, 1941) and the notes by Botvinnik to this game, from which it was clear that the move played by Boleslavsky, 3 ♘xe5, is not the strongest (after it Black could have equalised) and that 3 exd5 should be played.

A game by Konstantinopolsky from the World Correspondence Team Championship was published in one of the chess yearbooks in which the Soviet master played 3 exd5, and won. Thus equipped with a solid theoretical support, I decided to follow Botvinnik's recommendation.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **3** | **exd5** | **e4** |
| **4** | **♕e2** | **f5** |

This move also appeared once in one of the chess bulletins, and was played, if I remember correctly, by Kostyuchenko in a game with Kofman in one of the Ukraine tournaments. It was so long ago that I could not remember anything except the result of the game (Black won). The move 4...f5 does not fit in with Black's basic aims

---

1 I don't understand this, since Black wins in any case by 44...♖b7 45 ♔e6 ♔f8 46 d7 ♖b6+, etc.

in this variation. More in the spirit of the position is the rapid mobilisation of his pieces together with pawn sacrifices: 4...♘f6 5 d3 ♗e7 6 dxe4 0-0.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **5** | **d3** | **♘f6** |
| **6** | **dxe4** | **fxe4** |
| **7** | **♘c3** | **♗b4** |

This move was made instantly by Lutikov, but after the natural reply ...

**8 ♕b5+**

... Black sank deep into thought. It remains unclear at what point the variation prepared by my opponent could be improved. Here 7...♗e7 already looks totally inadequate, since after 8 ♘xe4 0-0 9 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 10 c3 Black gains no advantage at all, while the two extra pawns, or at least one, remain. Nevertheless, I think that this was stronger than the continuation chosen by Lutikov.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **8** | **...** | **c6** |
| **9** | **♕xb4** | **exf3** |
| **10** | **♗g5!** | |

How quickly the situation has altered! One after another the white pieces take up ideal posts, while Black has parted with his dark-squared bishop and has considerable difficulty in sheltering his king. Besides, material equality has not yet been fully re-established.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **10** | **...** | **cxd5** |

Against the sharp 10...a5 I was planning the logical 11 ♕c5.

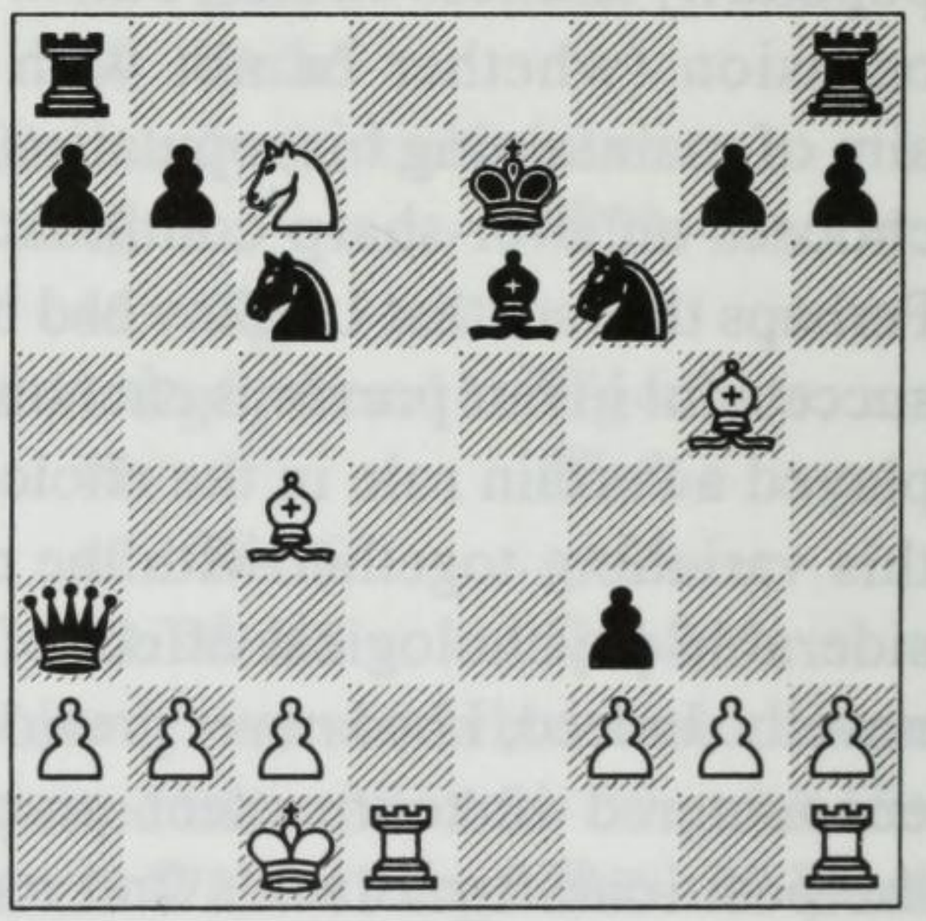
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **11** | **0-0-0** | **♘c6** |
| **12** | **♕a3** | |

12 ♗b5 would be a waste of time, since after 12...♔f7 White's queen is attacked and there is no point in strengthening the d5-pawn by exchanging on c6. Besides the move in the game, 12 ♕c5 was also strong, but I did not wish to transform a game which had begun so favourably for me into the colourless, though comfortable, position which would result after the exchange of queens (12...♕e7). Now this move is ruled out because of the reply 13 ♘xd5.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | **...** | **♗e6** |
| **13** | **♗c4** | |

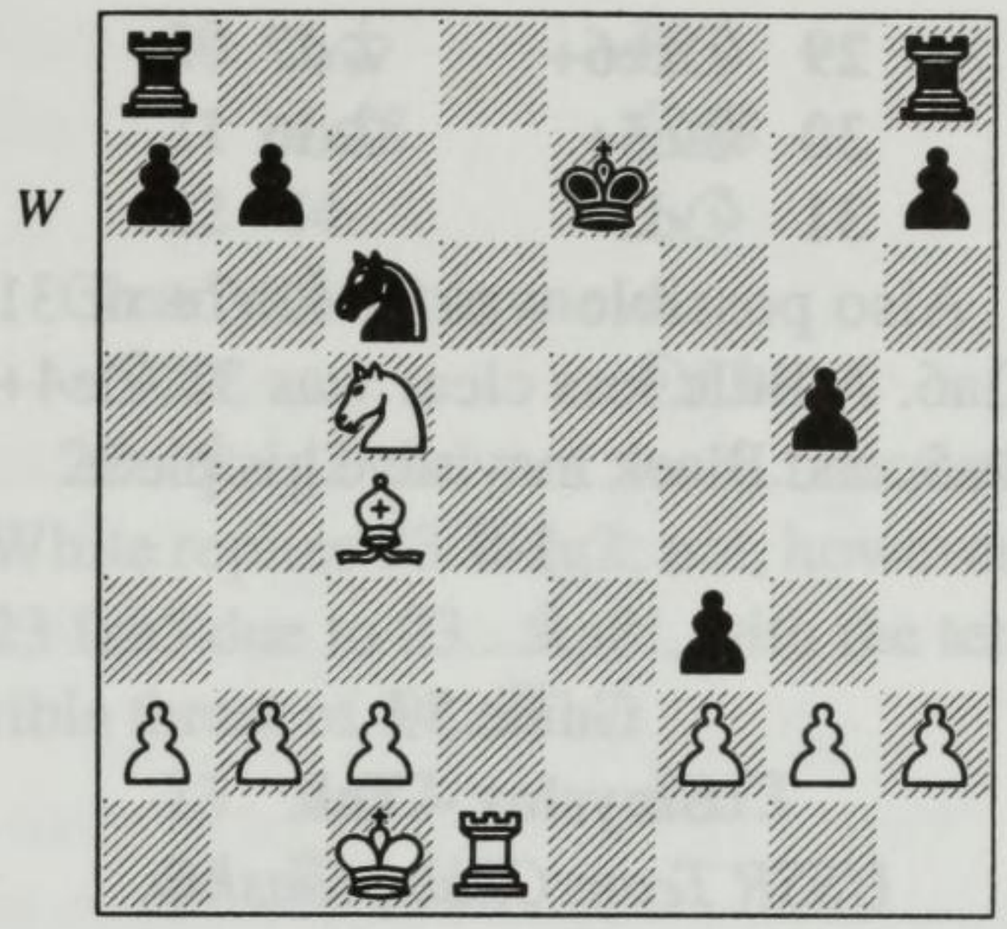
The beginning of an interesting combination. Here also White had a rich choice: 13 gxf3, 13 ♖e1 or 13 ♘b5. However, all these continuations seemed to me insufficiently energetic, although objectively each of them was in no way inferior to the one chosen by White.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **13** | **...** | **♕e7** |
| **14** | **♘xd5** | **♕xa3** |
| **15** | **♘c7+** | **♔e7** *(D)* |




Now it is clear that White has no time to capture the queen: his bishop

at c4 is *en prise*. It was possible to reach an ending with an extra pawn by playing 16 ♗xe6 ♕d6! (the only move in view of the threat of 17 ♖d7+) 17 ♖xd6 ♔xd6 18 ♗f4+ ♘e5 19 ♘xa8 ♔xe6 20 ♘c7+ ♔f5 21 ♗xe5 ♔xe5 22 gxf3, but during the game I could not work out an accurate winning plan in this ending. What is more important, the resulting position is out of keeping with what White had in mind when he gave up his queen. Since all the time White is short of just one piece to inflict the decisive blow, the following developing move suggests itself.




**16 ♖he1! ♕c5**

Evidently the best. 16...♕a5 loses to 17 ♖xe6+ ♔f8 18 ♗f4 ♖d8 (the only move) 19 ♖xd8+ ♘xd8 20 ♗d6+ ♔f7 21 ♖e5+ ♔g6 22 ♖xa5 fxg2 23 ♗d3+ and the pawn is stopped. In the case of 16...♕d6, I was intending to continue 17 ♖xd6 ♔xd6 18 ♘xe6, and since 18...♘e5 19 ♗f4 will not do, it is difficult to imagine that the black king will complete his journey safely. The continuation chosen by Lutikov also leaves him the exchange ahead, but here too White has very serious threats.

**17 ♖xe6+ ♔f8**
**18 ♖xf6+ gxf6**
**19 ♘e6+ ♔e7**

Weaker is 19...♔e8 20 ♘xc5 fxg5 21 ♘xb7 and because of the threat of 22 ♗b5, Black does not succeed in uniting his rooks.

**20 ♘xc5 fxg5** *(D)*

**21 ♖d7+ ♔f6**
**22 ♖d6+ ♔e7**

Against 22...♔f5 the simple 23 gxf3 is perhaps the strongest. After the text-move White could have once more checked with the rook on d7, and then played 24 gxf3 or 24 g4, but by now I was longing for a quiet life.

**23 ♖e6+ ♔d8**
**24 ♘xb7+ ♔c7**
**25 ♗d5 ♘b4**

This loses immediately. White would have been faced with certain technical difficulties after 25...fxg2 26 ♖xc6+ ♔xb7 27 ♖g6+ ♔c7 28 ♖xg5 ♖ae8, but even here I think that three pawns supported by a powerful bishop should win against a rook.

**26 ♗xf3 ♖ae8**
**27 ♘c5 ♘xa2+**

Even without this oversight Black's position is hopeless. Now the knight is lost as well.

**28 ♔b1 ♖xe6**

No better is 28...♘b4 29 c3 ♖xe6 30 ♘xe6+ ♔d6 (30...♔d7 31 ♘c5+ and 32 cxb4) 31 ♘xg5.

**29 ♘xe6+ ♔d7**
**30 ♘c5+ ♔d6**
**31 ♘d3**

Also possible was 31 ♘b7+ or 31 ♘a6. A little less clear was 31 ♘e4+ ♔e5, and Black may save his piece.

**1-0**

Game 59
**Smyslov – Tal**
*USSR Team Championship, Moscow 1964*
English Opening

**The knight was out of it ...**

A positional battle quickly turned into an instructive ending, in which White just could not activate his knight. The light-squared bishop literally paralysed his opponent.

**1 c4 g6**
**2 ♘c3 ♗g7**
**3 g3 c5**
**4 ♗g2 ♘c6**
**5 b3**

This, of course, is playable. Even so, it would appear that the plan involving an immediate a3, ♖b1 and b4 promises White more. In particular, this was confirmed in the game Smyslov-Stein from the Interzonal Tournament in Amsterdam.

**5 ... e6**
**6 ♗b2 ♘ge7**
**7 ♘a4**

I do not consider that Black's king's bishop is such a dangerous enemy. The cost of its exchange – two tempi – allows Black to obtain a comfortable position without difficulty.

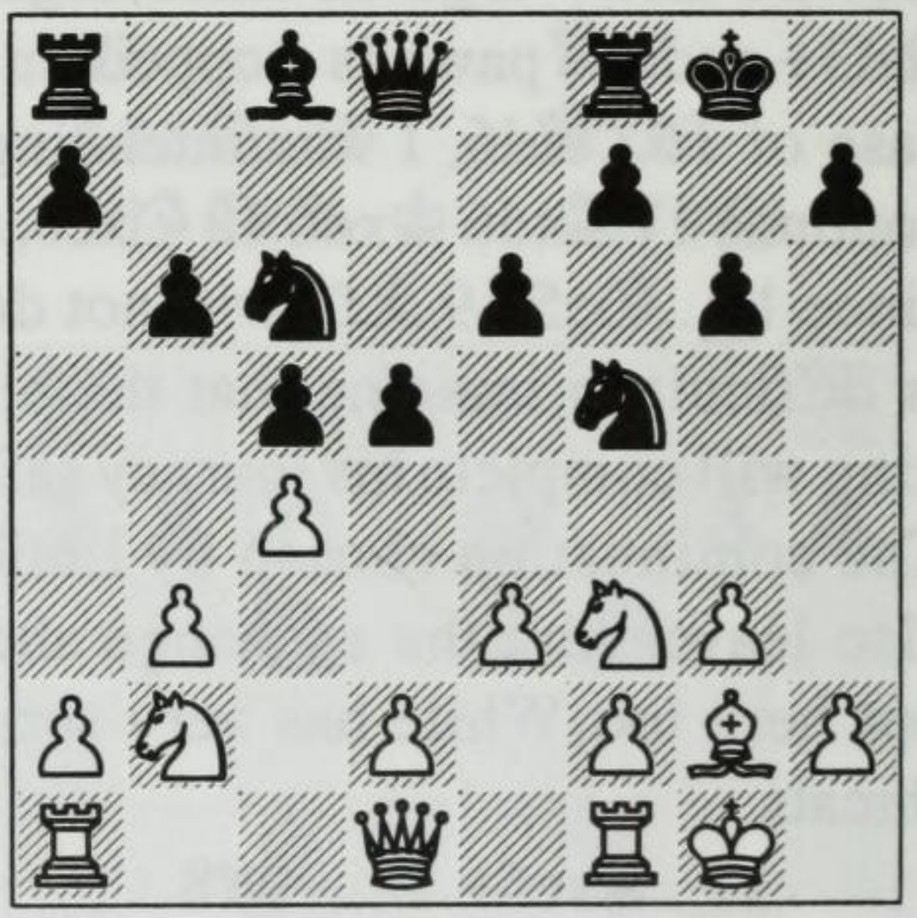
**7 ... ♗xb2**
**8 ♘xb2 0-0**

It is curious that the natural 8...b6 would immediately lead Black into difficulties after 9 d4! and if 9...cxd4 then 10 ♘f3.

**9 e3 d5**
**10 ♘f3 ♘f5**

It is important to prevent d4. After 10...b6 11 0-0 ♗b7 12 d4 an almost symmetrical position would arise, in which, however, the difference in the positions of the knights would be in White's favour. After exchanges in the centre one knight would post itself on c4 and the other on d4.

**11 0-0 b6** *(D)*


*W*

**12 ♘a4 ♗b7**
**13 cxd5 exd5**
**14 d3!**

This is the best set-up for White's central pawns. Weaker is 14 d4 cxd4 15 g4 (15 exd4 ♕f6) 15...♘h4 16

♘xd4 ♘xd4 17 ♕xd4 ♘xg2 18 ♔xg2 ♖e8 19 ♘c3 ♖c8 and now dangerous for White is 20 ♖ac1 ♖xc3. Smyslov intends to advance d4 under more favourable circumstances, exploiting the fact that at the moment it is not good for Black to play ...d4.

**14 ... ♕f6**
**15 ♕d2 ♖ad8**
**16 ♖fd1 ♖fe8**
**17 ♖ab1**

A not altogether successful continuation. White prepares the undermining b4, but does not have time to carry it out. More accurate was 17 ♖ac1, aiming for a position in which Black has an isolated pawn.

**17 ... ♘d6**

Now White must reckon with the possibility of ...♘e4. True, after 18 ♘c3, the immediate 18...♘e4 does not work due to 19 dxe4 dxe4 20 ♘d5, but Black has a good reply in 18...♘b4, after which 19 a3 d4 is bad for White.

**18 ♘e1 d4**

Now that White's knight has retreated this is the opportune moment for the advance.

**19 e4 ♕e7**
**20 ♘c2**

White continues his plan of advancing b4, in which case his knights will be well placed for play on the queenside. Smyslov must have overlooked one tactical point, otherwise he would doubtless have played 20 f4 so as to meet 20...f5 with the advance of his central pawn, though even in this case Black is well placed.

**20 ... f5**
**21 exf5 ♘e5**
**22 f4**

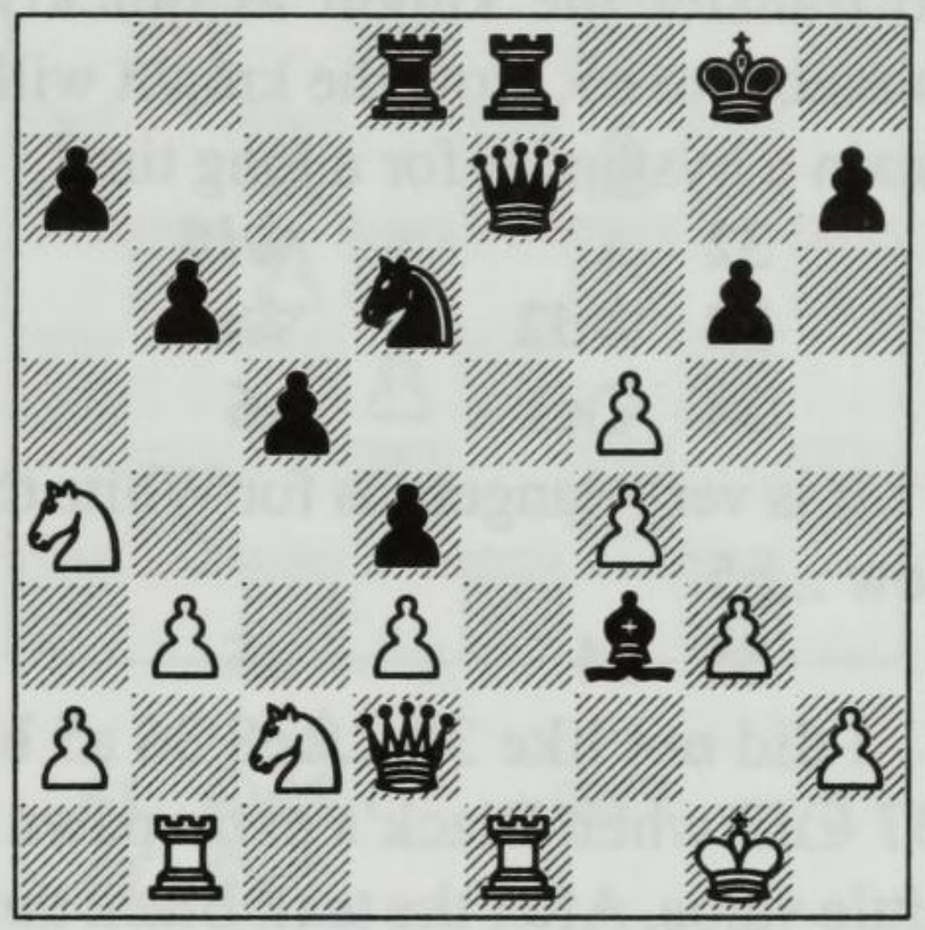
Clearly the only move.

**22 ... ♘f3+**

22...♗xg2 did not work, because White replies 23 ♕xg2; not, however, 23 fxe5 due to 23...♗a8!, with the terrible threat of 24...♕b7.

**23 ♗xf3 ♗xf3**
**24 ♖e1** *(D)*

*B*



**24 ... ♕e2!**

On any other move White would calmly be able to meet all the threats.

**25 ♖xe2 ♖xe2**
**26 ♕xe2**

Both players were already somewhat short of time, and therefore Smyslov instantly decided against the idea of refuting the queen sacrifice. In the case of 26 ♕c1 I was intending 26...♖g2+ 27 ♔f1 ♖xh2 28 ♘e1 ♗d5 29 ♖b2 ♖h1+ 30 ♔f2 ♖e8 and it is very difficult for White to bring into play his numerous, but extremely badly placed, forces.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **26** | **...** | **♗xe2** |
| **27** | **♘b2** | **gxf5** |

The knight must remain on d6 to restrain White's knight on b2.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **28** | **♖e1** | **♗h5** |
| **29** | **♘c4** | **♘xc4** |
| **30** | **bxc4** | **♖e8** |
| **31** | **♔f2** | **♖xe1** |
| **32** | **♔xe1** | |

I think that better defensive possibilities were offered by 32 ♘xe1 so as to transfer the knight as quickly as possible to e5. Now the knight will remain a bystander for a long time.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **32** | **...** | **♔f8** |
| **33** | **♔d2** | **♔e7** |
| **34** | **♘e1** | **a6** |

It is very dangerous for White to allow ...b5.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **35** | **a4** | **a5** |

I did not like 35...♗e8 36 a5 bxa5 37 ♘f3 when Black's extra pawn has little value. After the text, Black threatens to capture the a-pawn for nothing, and so White's reply is forced.

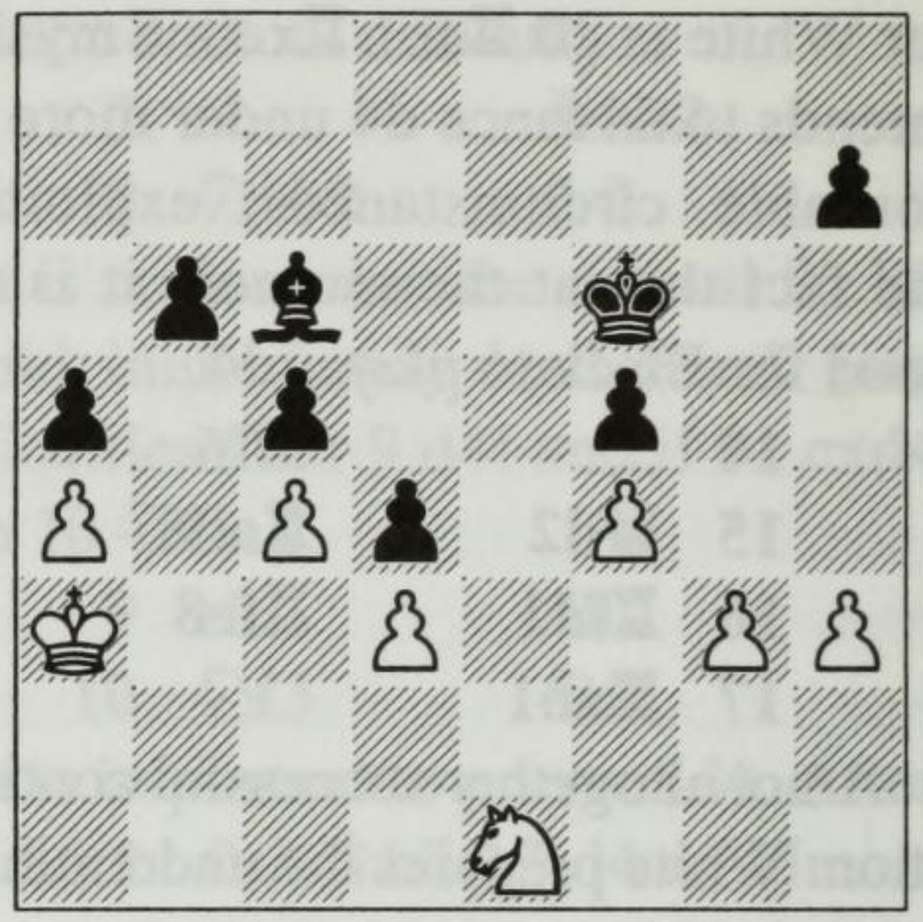
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **36** | **♔c2** | **♗e8** |
| **37** | **♔b3** | **♗c6** |

Once again the knight is immobilised.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **38** | **♔a3** | **♔f6** |
| **39** | **♔b3** | **♔g6** |
| **40** | **♔a3** | **♔h5** |
| **41** | **h3** | |

In this position the game was adjourned. Analysis showed convincingly that if the black h-pawn stood on h6, then a draw would be inevitable.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **41** | **...** | **♔g6** |
| **42** | **♔b3** | **♔g7** |
| **43** | **♔a3** | **♔f6** *(D)* |




| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **44** | **♔b3** | |

The preceding king manoeuvre was made with the aim of reaching just this position. Now the return journey begins.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **44** | **...** | **♗e8** |

The bishop is aiming for d1. White must not allow it there, for instance: 45 ♘f3 ♗h5 46 ♘e5 ♗d1+ 47 ♔a3 ♔e6 48 ♘c6 ♗c2 49 ♘e5 h6 50 g4 ♗d1 with zugzwang. There remains only ...

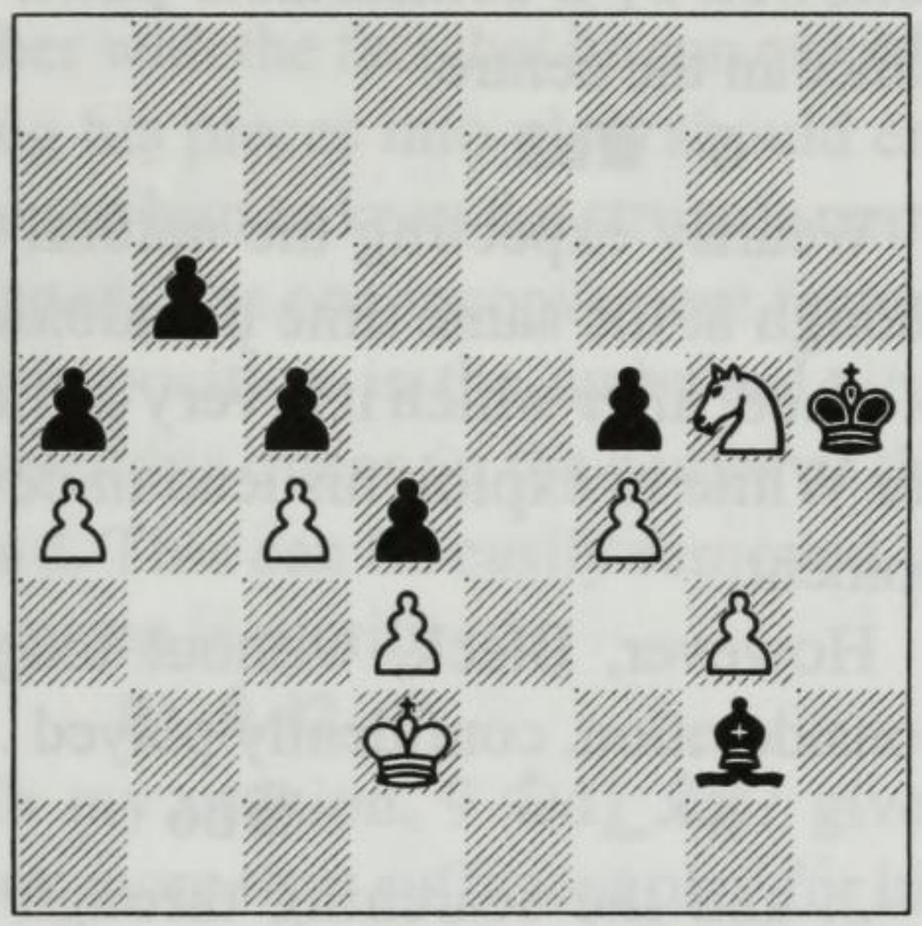
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **45** | **♘g2** | **♗h5** |
| **46** | **♔c2** | **♗e2** |
| **47** | **♘e1** | **♗f1** |
| **48** | **♘f3** | |

White loses after 48 h4 since the bishop returns to c6 and Black's king penetrates into White's kingside pawns.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **48** | **...** | **♗xh3** |
| **49** | **♘g5** | **♗g2** |
| **50** | **♘xh7+** | **♔g7** |
| **51** | **♘g5** | **♔g6** |
| **52** | **♔d2** | **♗c6** |
| **53** | **♔c1** | |

White unhesitatingly agrees to part with his a-pawn in order to transfer his knight to e5. Black does not agree to this and for the moment repeats moves.

**53 ... ♗g2**
**54 ♔d2 ♔h5** *(D)*




**55 ♘e6**

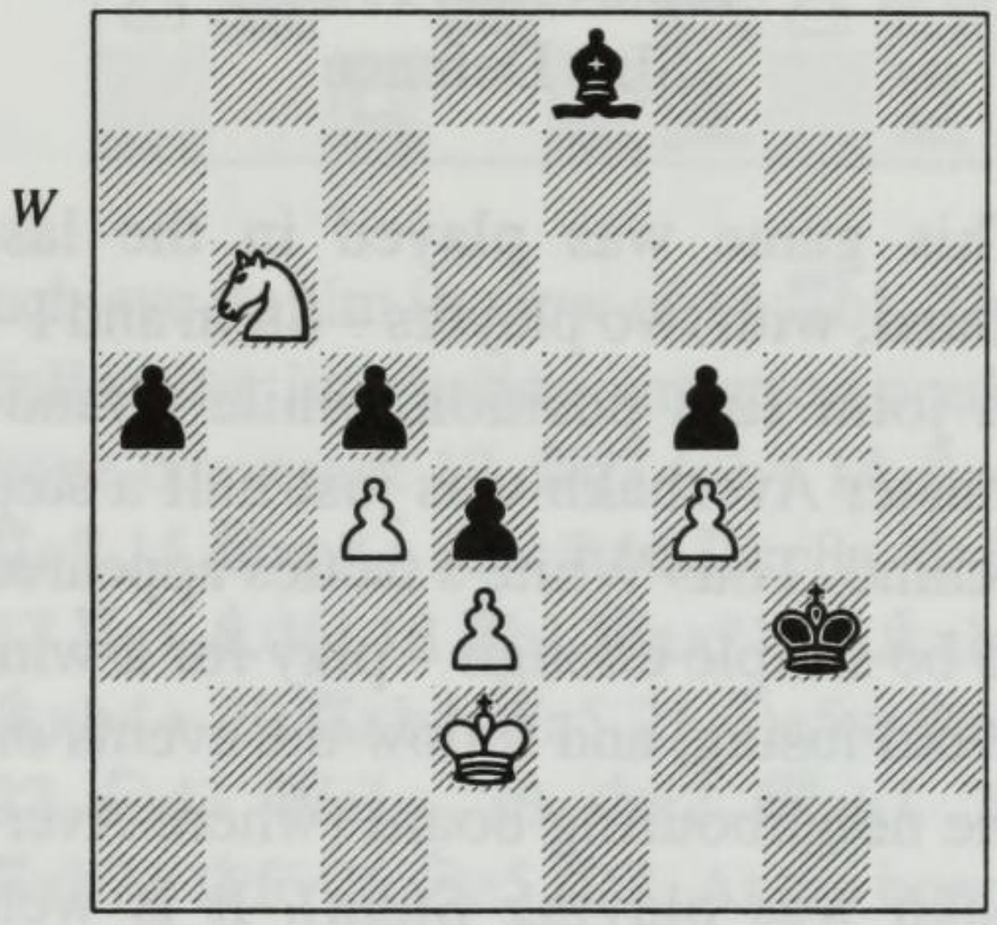
White had various other defensive possibilities but they were similarly inadequate. For example: 55 ♔e2 ♔g4 56 ♔f2 ♗c6 57 ♘f7 ♗xa4 58 ♘h6+ ♔h5 59 ♘xf5 ♗d7 60 ♘d6 a4 61 ♘e4 a3 62 ♘d2 ♗a4 or 55 ♘f7 ♔g4 56 ♘h6+ ♔xg3 57 ♘xf5+ ♔xf4 58 ♘e7 ♔e5 59 ♔c2 (or 59 ♘c8 ♗c6 60 ♘xb6 ♔d6) 59...♔e6 60 ♘g6 ♗c6 61 ♔b3 ♔f6 62 ♘f4 ♔f5, and the black king reaches e3.

**55 ... ♔g4**
**56 ♘c7 ♗c6**
**57 ♘d5 ♔xg3**
**58 ♘e7 ♗d7**

Capturing the a-pawn would have made the win more difficult: 58...♗xa4 59 ♘xf5+ ♔xf4 60 ♘e7 ♔e5 61 ♘c8! and Black cannot play 61...♗d7 62 ♘xb6 ♗c6 63 ♔c2 ♔d6? 64 ♔b3 ♔c7 65 ♘a4.

**59 ♘d5 ♗xa4**
**60 ♘xb6 ♗e8** *(D)*

To be frank, even now I can't find the reason behind this move. 60...♗c6 61 ♘d5 ♔f3 62 ♘e7 ♗d7 63 ♘d5 a4 would have won easily.




**61 ♘d5 ♔f3**
**62 ♘c7**

Now Black loses his c-pawn. This was not at all part of his plans, but his position is so strong that even now the win is not difficult.

**62 ... ♗c6**
**63 ♘e6 a4**
**64 ♘xc5 a3**
**65 ♘b3**

White's misfortune lies in the fact that he cannot play 65 ♘e6 a2 66 ♘xd4+ ♔xf4 67 ♘c2 ♗a4 68 ♘a1 ♔g3. The rest is simple.

**65 ... a2**
**66 ♔c1 ♔xf4**
**67 ♔b2 ♔e3**
**68 ♘a5 ♗e8**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **69** | **c5** | **f4** |
| **70** | **c6** | **♗xc6** |
| **71** | **♘xc6** | **f3** |
| **72** | **♘e5** | **f2** |

**0-1**

Game 60

**Tal – Fuchs**

*Kislovodsk 1964*

Slav Defence

This game was played in the last round, with two players – Stein and I – in joint first position, while Grandmaster Averbakh was just half a step behind. Thus White's tactics appeared to be simple enough – play for a win, avoid losing, and follow the events on the neighbouring board (where Averbakh was playing Stein). It is well known that Master Fuchs (along with many other leading East German players) invariably answers 1 e4 with 1...e6, and has frequently upheld Black's cause in the most intricate variations. Not feeling inclined to conduct a theoretical discussion on 'French' affairs, I decided to go in for another topical variation (the so-called 'Meran'), which also occurs frequently in Fuchs's games, and whose complications I consider to be very attractive for White.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **d4** | **d5** |
| **2** | **c4** | **c6** |
| **3** | **♘c3** | **♘f6** |
| **4** | **e3** | **♗f5** |

Here White felt dejected. His psychology had 'worked', but this move is just what he did not want. In place of a sharp struggle he has prospects of some dreary queenside pressure. Nevertheless ...

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **5** | **cxd5** | **cxd5** |

Markedly weaker is 5...♘xd5 because of 6 ♗c4 e6 7 ♘ge2 soon to be followed by a comfortable pawn advance in the centre.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **6** | **♕b3** | |

Wearily expecting the natural (although at the same time paradoxical) 6...♗c8, after which it is very difficult for White to exploit his lead in development.

However, Black, without lengthy consideration, confidently played ...

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **6** | **...** | **♕b6** |

... and the searching through my memory began. Unless White wishes to concede that he has not a shade of an advantage, he must accept the challenge (and take the pawn).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **7** | **♘xd5** | **♘xd5** |
| **8** | **♕xd5** | **♕b4+** |

Here, at last, I remembered where I had seen this position before. In 1957 the Soviet student team, on its way back from Reykjavik, played a match against Denmark in Copenhagen. The experienced master Enevoldsen adopted this same sharp system against Averbakh. As far as I remember the game continued 9 ♗d2 ♕xb2, and here Averbakh dampened his opponent's spirits by playing 10 ♕b5+. The ending turned out to be somewhat to White's advantage. As I found out after the game, my opponent had observed this variation during a match

between East Germany and Denmark. Black had been the same Enevoldsen, while White had been Uhlmann. In this game also an ending was quickly reached after White forced the exchange of queens. It seems to me that White's advantage in the centre, together with the fact that he can quickly bring his pieces into play, should encourage him to keep the struggle complicated. The one inconvenient feature of his position is the awkward situation of his queen in the centre of the board. This can be easily removed, if the queen is sacrificed.

**9 ♗d2**

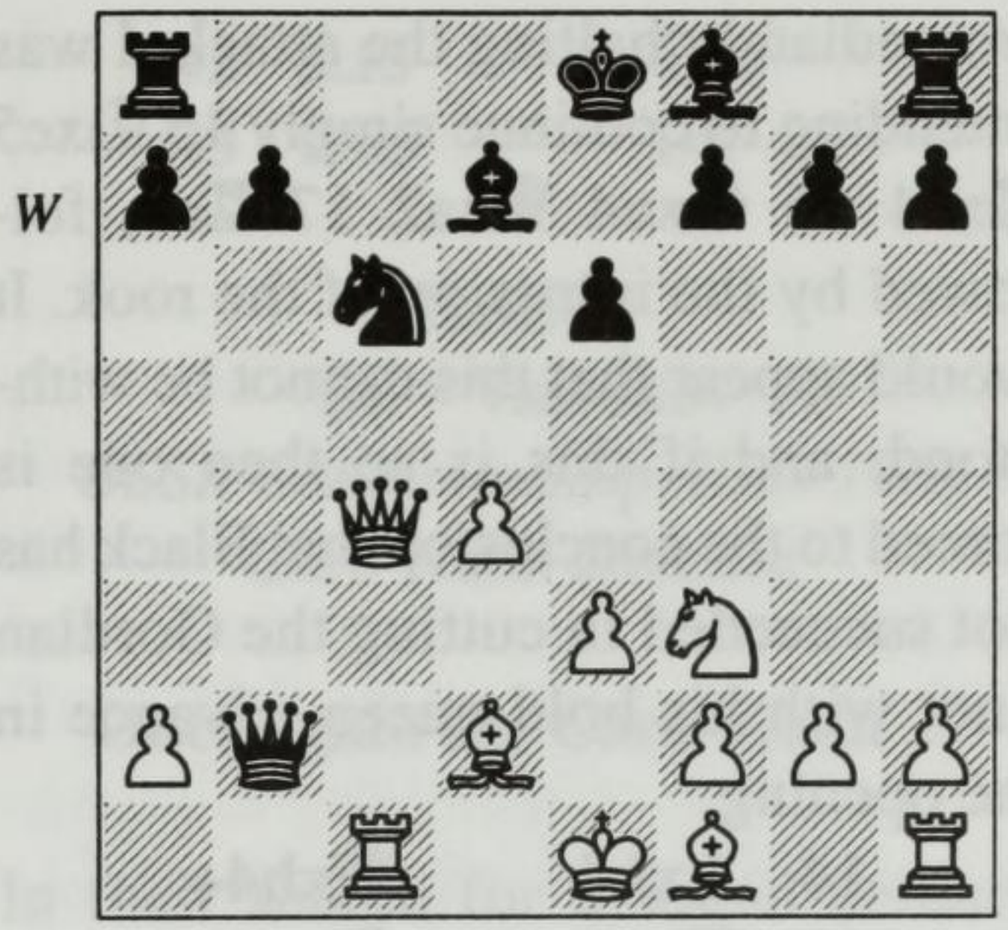
In my opinion, 9 ♔d1 ♗d7 gives Black more than sufficient play for his pawn.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **9** | **...** | **♕xb2** |
| **10** | **♖c1** | **♗d7** |
| **11** | **♘f3** | **e6** |
| **12** | **♕c4!** | |

The imminent opposition of the queen with Black's rook, which will soon move to c8, is relatively harmless for White.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | **...** | **♘c6** *(D)* |
| **13** | **♗e2** | |

After lengthy reflection, White all the same agrees to the exchange of queens. True, the ending here is much more favourable for him than in the variation chosen by Averbakh, since Black has had to waste further time. Instead of 13 ♗e2, very tempting was 13 ♗d3, when 13...♗b4 does not




achieve its aim in view of 14 ♖b1. The following interesting variation could have occurred: 13 ♗d3 ♘b4 14 ♗e4 ♖c8 15 ♕xc8+ ♗xc8 16 ♖xc8+ ♔d7 17 ♖c1 ♗d6! 18 ♖b1 ♕xa2! 19 ♗xb4 ♗xb4+ 20 ♖xb4 ♕a5 21 ♘e5+ ♔e7 22 ♘d3 ♕a1+ 23 ♔e2 ♕xh1 24 ♖xb7+ ♔f6 25 ♘e5 ♖f8. At the board White did not succeed in finding a decisive strengthening of the attack, for example, 26 ♘g4+[1] ♔g5 27 f4+ ♔h5! (27...♔xg4 28 ♗f3+ wins the queen) 28 ♘f6+ ♔h6.

Remembering in time that piece of 'chess' wisdom – don't expect too much of a good thing – White decides to give up his queen in a different way, only this time Black is not agreeable.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **13** | **...** | **♗b4** |

Now Black is forced into an undesirable ending. The critical line (though hardly any stronger) was 13...♖c8 14 0-0 ♘e5, setting the cunning trap 15 ♕xc8+ ♗xc8 16 ♘xe5 ♗d7 17 ♖c7? ♕xd2 18 ♖xd7 ♕xe2 19 ♖c1 ♗c5!

---

1 26 ♖b1 is an attractive win.

immediately halting the attack. I was intending to continue simply 15 ♘xe5 ♖xc4 16 ♘xc4 ♕xa2 17 ♖a1, followed by the intrusion of the rook. It would appear that this cannot be withstood, and if this is so then one is forced to the conclusion that Black has not succeeded in cutting the Gordian knot with his bold queen advance in the opening.

**14 ♗xb4 ♕xb4+**
**15 ♕xb4 ♘xb4**
**16 ♖c7!**

This is the whole point. Black has no time to capture the a-pawn because of 17 ♘e5.

**16 ... ♗c6**
**17 ♘e5 0-0**
**18 ♘xc6 bxc6**

18...♘xc6 was perhaps more tenacious when 19 ♖xb7 is bad in view of 19...♖ab8. However, after 19 0-0! ♖ab8 20 ♖b1 White's threats remain equally strong.

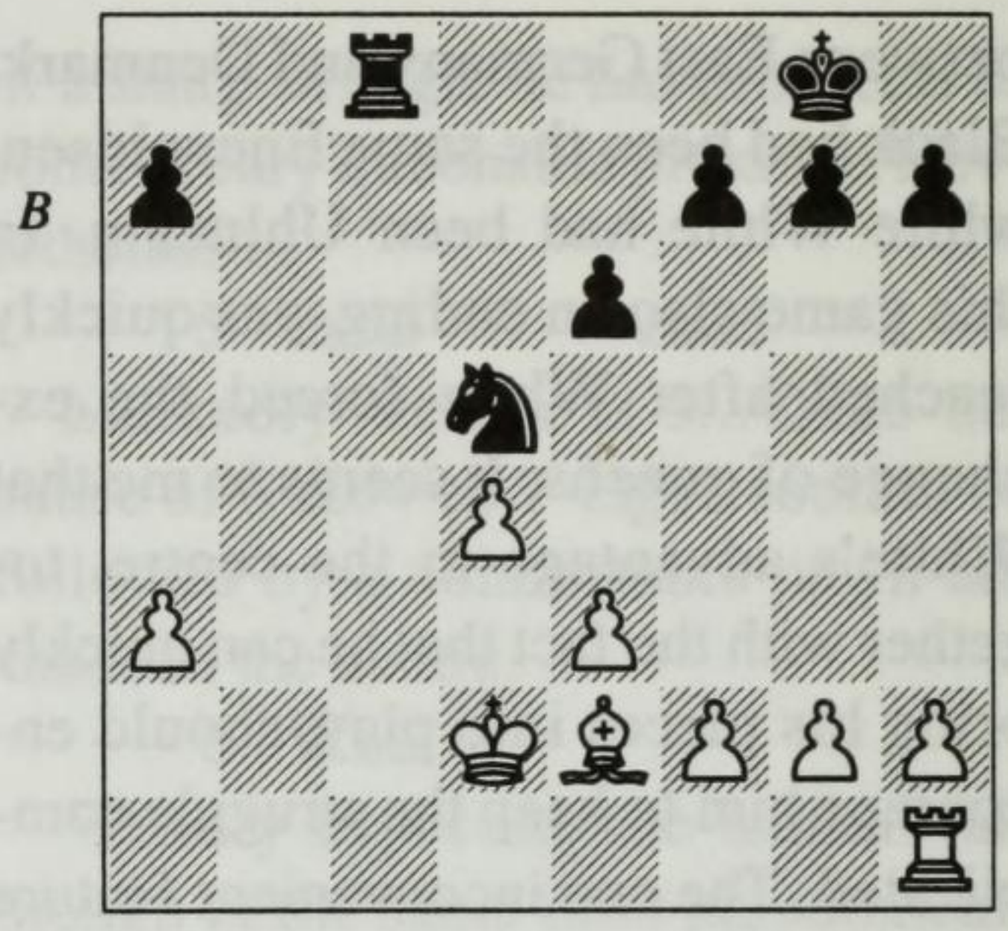
**19 a3 ♘d5**

Still worse was 19...♘c2+ 20 ♔d2 ♘xa3 21 ♖a1 ♘b5 22 ♖xc6 when Black must lose at least his a-pawn, while his knight is very badly placed.

**20 ♖xc6 ♖fc8**
**21 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8**
**22 ♔d2** *(D)*

It is time to sum up. White is a pawn up, his bishop is markedly stronger than the opponent's knight, and there is plenty of material left. The remainder is fairly simple technique.

**22 ... g6**
**23 ♗f3 ♘b6**




**24 ♖c1 ♖xc1**
**25 ♔xc1 ♔f8**

Nothing is gained by 25...♘c4 26 ♗e2 ♘xa3? 27 ♗d3.

**26 ♔c2 ♔e7**
**27 ♔c3 a5**
**28 h4**

As Black has managed to entrench himself on the queenside, White turns to the realisation of his extra pawn. For the moment there is the threat 29 g4 and g5, arranging the kingside pawns in the most favourable way.

**28 ... h6**
**29 e4 f6**
**30 e5 ♔f7**
**31 ♗c6 ♔e7**
**32 f4**

The noose tightens.

**32 ... ♔f7**
**33 g3**

A completely harmless finesse.

**33 ... ♔e7**
**34 g4**

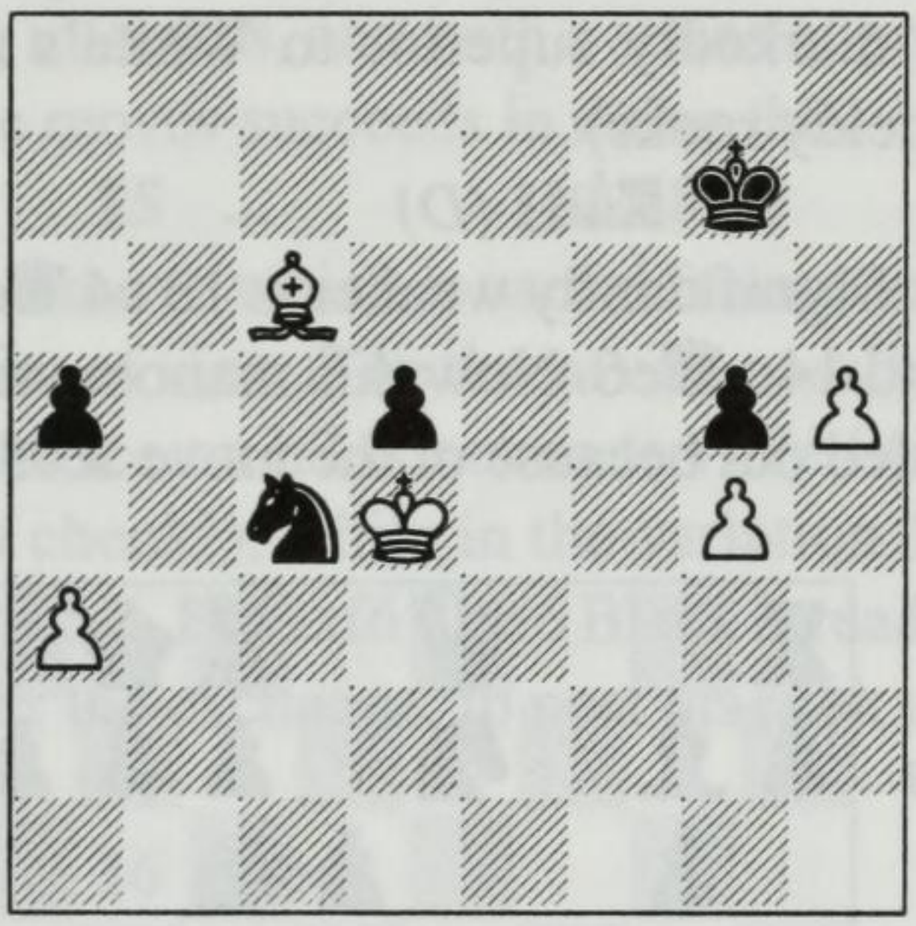
Threatening 35 g5, after which all Black's kingside pawns would be subject to attack by the white bishop.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **34** | **...** | **g5** |
| **35** | **exf6+** | **♔xf6** |
| **36** | **fxg5+** | **hxg5** |
| **37** | **h5** | |

While the outside passed pawn distracts Black's king, the white king easily finds a way through for its triumphal entry.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **37** | **...** | **♔g7** |
| **38** | **d5** | **exd5** |
| **39** | **♔d4** | **♘c4** *(D)* |

*W*



**40 ♗b5!**

I was less happy about 40 a4 ♔f6 when the knight gets to e5. White improves the position of his bishop with gain of tempo. Material is not so important here, since most of Black's pawns are doomed anyway.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **40** | **...** | **♘d6** |

The pawn ending after 40...♘xa3 41 ♗d3 ♘c4 is hopeless. White captures both pawns and returns with his king to d4. It is easy to see that wherever Black's king is placed he will lose when he has to move.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **41** | **♗d3** | **♘e8** |
| **42** | **♗f5** | **♘f6** |
| **43** | **♔e5** | **1-0** |

Game 61

**Tal – Vasiukov**

*USSR Championship, Kiev 1965*

Caro-Kann Defence

**Once again the Caro-Kann ...**

In their search for a sound defence against the 'rust-proof' 1 e4, players with Black have been turning more and more frequently to the (until quite recently) 'half-forgotten' Caro-Kann Defence. The army of supporters of this opening has already received such 'reinforcements' as Botvinnik and Smyslov, while the present World Champion (Petrosian) has been fond of the move 1...c6 'since childhood'. At the start of the 32nd USSR Championship, Vasiukov was also enlisted into the Caro-Kann legions. However, his debut in this opening did not turn out very successfully. In the second round he lost to Bronstein, and in the fourth ...

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **c6** |
| **2** | **♘c3** | **d5** |
| **3** | **d4** | **dxe4** |
| **4** | **♘xe4** | **♘d7** |
| **5** | **♘f3** | |

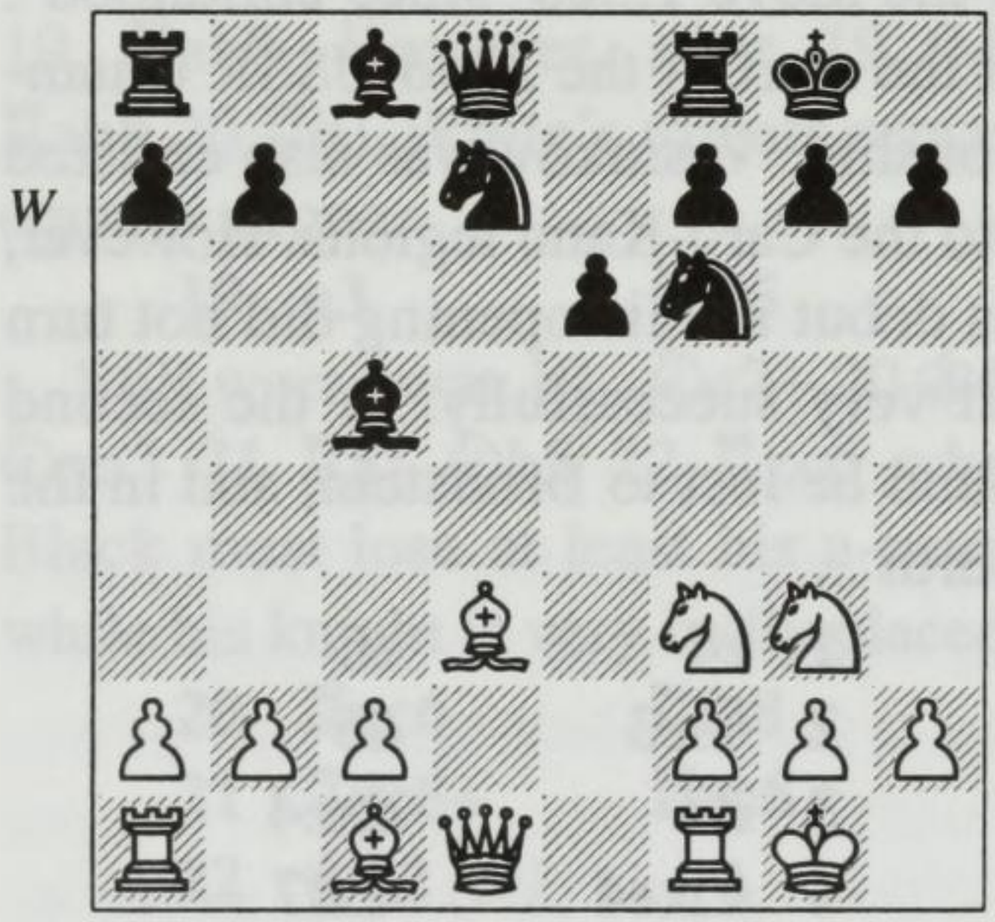
More fashionable nowadays is the variation 5 ♗c4 ♘gf6 6 ♘g5 e6 7 ♕e2 or 7 ♘e2. I decided to choose an old-fashioned system, reckoning that, in order to defend accurately, Black would require not only knowledge of

the opening variation, but also experience, and, as I have already said, my opponent was somewhat lacking in this.

**5 ... ♘gf6**
**6 ♘g3 e6**
**7 ♗d3 c5**
**8 0-0 cxd4**
**9 ♘xd4 ♗c5**

Up till now, all according to the latest prescription. In the game Bilek-Smyslov (16th Olympiad, Tel-Aviv 1964) White played 10 ♘b3, but after 10...♗b6 it soon became clear that Black had an excellent position since White's kingside activity is hindered by the absence of his knight while his queenside play is hindered by its presence! Naturally, more logical is ...

**10 ♘f3 0-0** *(D)*



**11 ♕e2 b6**

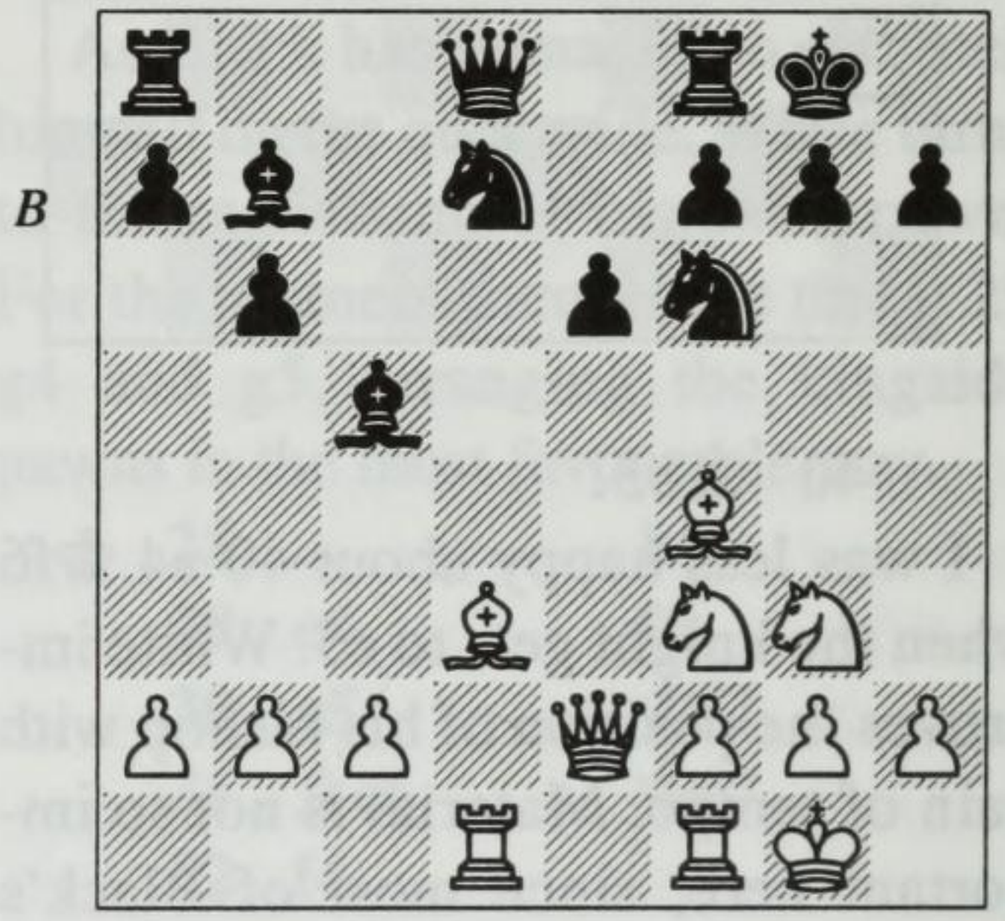
The first, though as yet not particularly significant, inaccuracy. The place for the black queen in this variation is on c7, and it is best to begin to develop with this move. From c7 the queen prevents White's dark-squared bishop from taking up an active post on the h2-b8 diagonal.

**12 ♗f4 ♗b7**

After this move Black's defence is already difficult. The bishop should have been harassed immediately. After 12...♘d5 13 ♗g5 ♕c7 14 ♕e4 ♘5f6! Black would successfully beat off the attack (unfavourable for White is 15 ♕xa8 ♗b7, when, with the support of her active minor pieces, Black's queen is markedly superior to White's unwieldy rooks).

**13 ♖ad1** *(D)*

Significantly weaker is 13 c4 ♕c8! and 14...♕c6. Now this manoeuvre is ruled out because of the move ♗b5.



**13 ... ♘d5**
**14 ♗g5 ♕c7**
**15 ♘h5!**

Exploiting the absence of Black's pieces from the kingside, White immediately begins to create threats. Against 15...♖ae8, for instance, he intends the thematic combination 16 c4

♘b4 17 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 18 ♖xd7 ♕xd7 19 ♘e5 ♕d4 20 ♘f6+ gxf6 21 ♕h5+, with a rapid mate. If, on 15...♖ae8 16 c4, Black replies 16...♘5f6, then after 17 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 18 ♘e5, Black's position is most unpleasant.

However, White's 15th move also has one drawback: his knight on h5 is a condemned man, since it is clear that his only task can be to give himself up on g7. Sensing the danger, Vasiukov begins to make amends for his opening mistakes, and with a series of precise moves succeeds in doing this.

**15 ... ♔h8!**

A move which is useful from every point of view. The threat of a possible sacrifice on h7 is not so terrible (it is not check!), while in the variation 16 c4 ♘5f6 17 ♘xf6 ♘xf6 Black is ready, after the exchange, to post his rook on g8.

**16 ♗e4**

During the game I just couldn't make up my mind between this move and the pressurising 16 ♖fe1. Probably 16 ♗e4 is stronger, since on 16 ♖fe1 Black could reply 16...♖ae8 17 ♗e4 f5! After the game Vasiukov said that he was not afraid of the queen sacrifice 18 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 19 ♖xd5 exd5 20 ♕xe8 ♖xe8 21 ♖xe8+ ♘f8 and perhaps he was right.

**16 ... f6!**

Once again the best and possibly the only move. I was hoping to play 17 c4, which would have given me the advantage over the whole board. 16...f5 would have been weaker in view of 17 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 18 ♘f4 when 18...♗c4 fails to 19 ♖xd7!

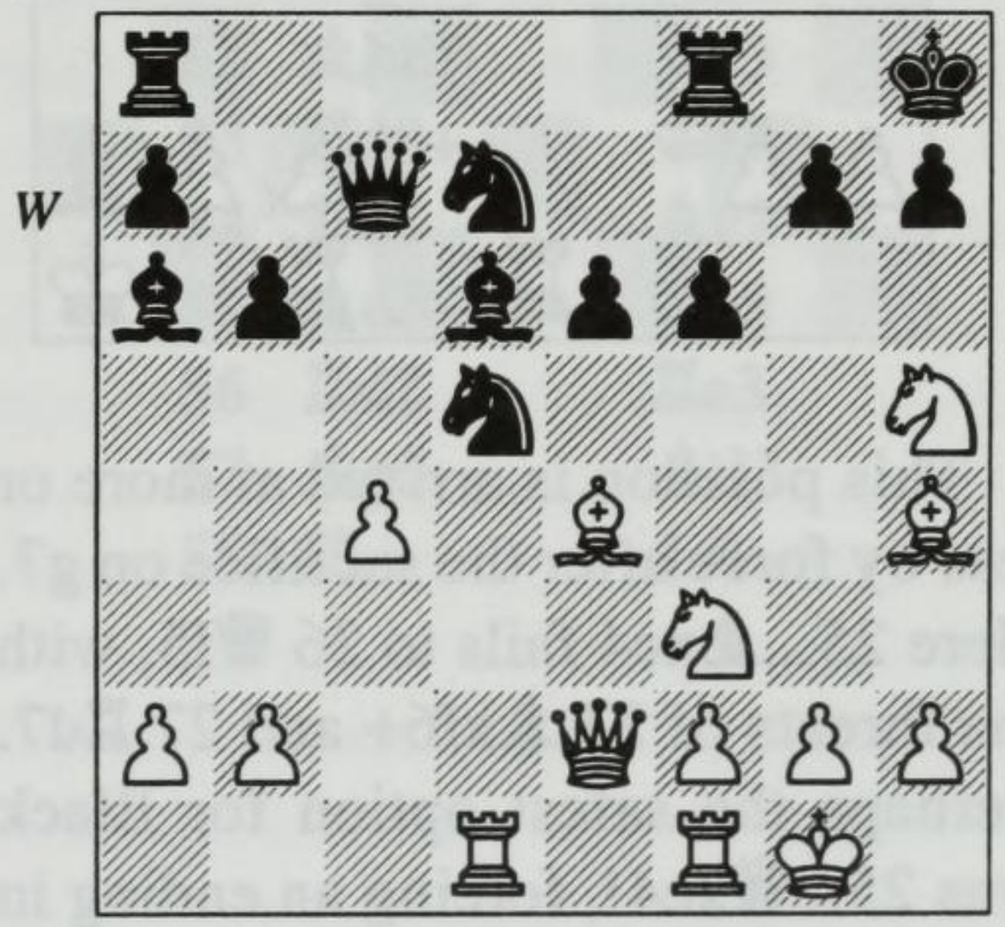
**17 ♗h4**

White could have played to win a pawn by 17 ♗f4 but after 17...♘xf4 18 ♘xf4 ♕xf4! 19 ♗xb7 ♖ad8 20 ♕xe6 ♘e5! any real advantage would have instantly disappeared; 21 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 22 ♘xe5? loses to 22...♕xf2+!

**17 ... ♗d6**

Very interesting play. Black only has to continue 18...♘c5, and he will seize the initiative. White's move is therefore forced.

**18 c4 ♗a6!** *(D)*



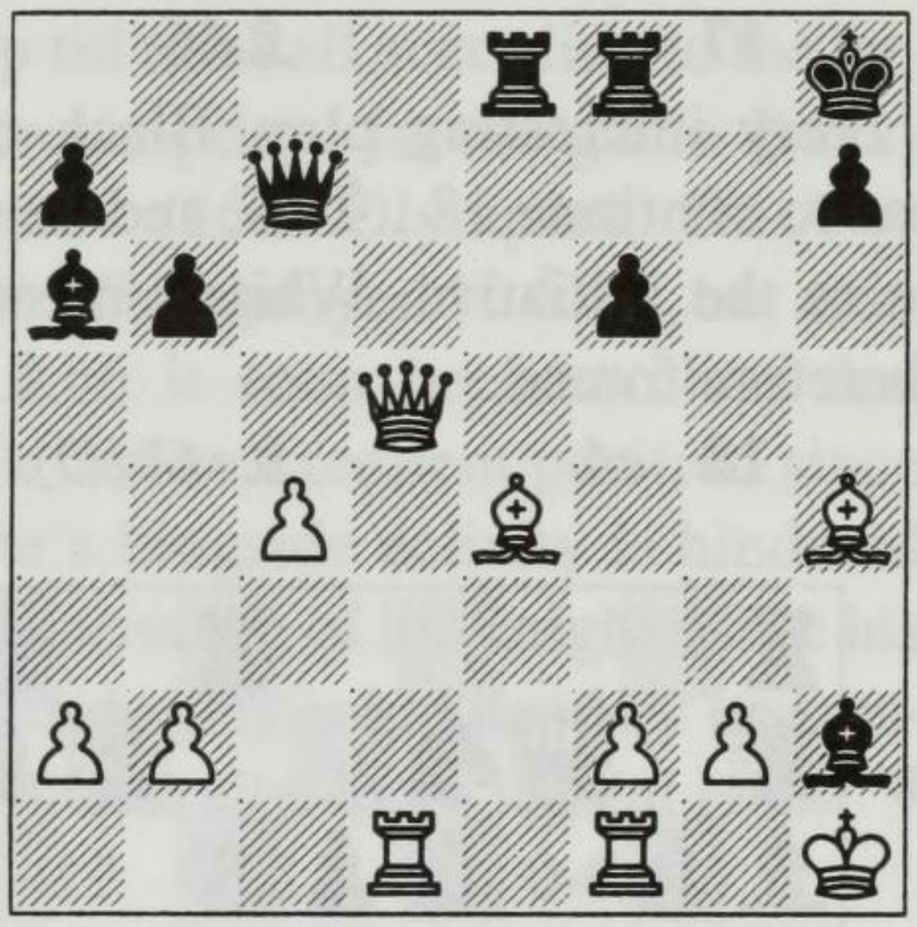
How is White to continue? To defend the c-pawn with the rook is inconsistent – after all the pin is still maintained. On 19 ♗d3 Black replies 19...♘f4 20 ♘xf4 ♗xf4 21 ♕xe6 ♘c5. The position demands strong measures, but 19 ♗xh7 is insufficient in view of 19...♔xh7 20 ♕e4+ ♔h8! 21 ♕xe6 ♗xc4. There is only one other move:

**19 ♘xg7! ♔xg7**

Forced. 19...♘f4 fails to the reply 20 ♕d2.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **20** | **♘d4** | **♘c5** |
| **21** | **♕g4+** | **♔h8** |
| **22** | **♘xe6** | **♘xe6** |
| **23** | **♕xe6** | **♖ae8** |
| **24** | **♕xd5** | **♗xh2+** |
| **25** | **♔h1** *(D)* | |

*B*



This position is arrived at more or less by force after the sacrifice on g7. Here 25...♗xc4 fails to 26 ♕f5, with the threats of 27 ♗xf6+ and 27 ♖d7. Perhaps the safest option for Black was 25...♕xc4!, forcing an ending in which, though White has slightly the better of it, a draw looks likely.

**25 ... ♕f4**

This move by Vasiukov appears very tempting. Black attacks both bishops, but clearly he had underestimated his opponent's reply.

**26 ♕h5**

The point is that 26...♖xe4 loses to 27 ♖d7, and so:

**26 ... ♕xe4**

**27 ♖fe1**

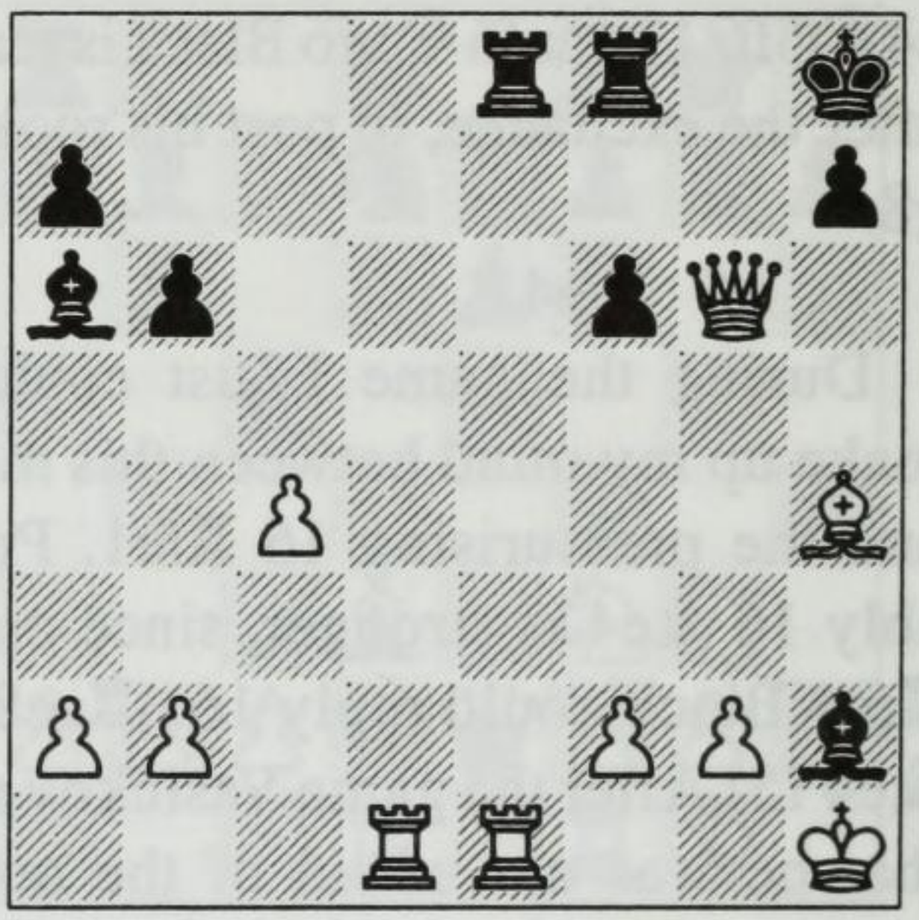
Stronger was 27 ♖de1. The move in the game is the prelude to a curious joint oversight.

**27 ... ♕g6**

Naturally the exchange of his queen for two rooks did not suit Black as his king is in too much danger. In aiming for this position, I had intended here 28 ♗xf6+, and after 28...♕xf6 (weaker is 28...♔g8 29 ♕d5+ ♕f7 30 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 31 ♔xh2) 29 ♖xe8. However, after 29...♗d6 30 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8! 31 ♖e1 ♕xf2! Black successfully defends himself. My opponent, who was in severe time-trouble, was also afraid of 28 ♗xf6+, and perhaps for this reason, when I 'sadly' played ...

**28 ♕xg6** *(D)*

*B*



... Vasiukov 'joyfully' made the immediate reply ...

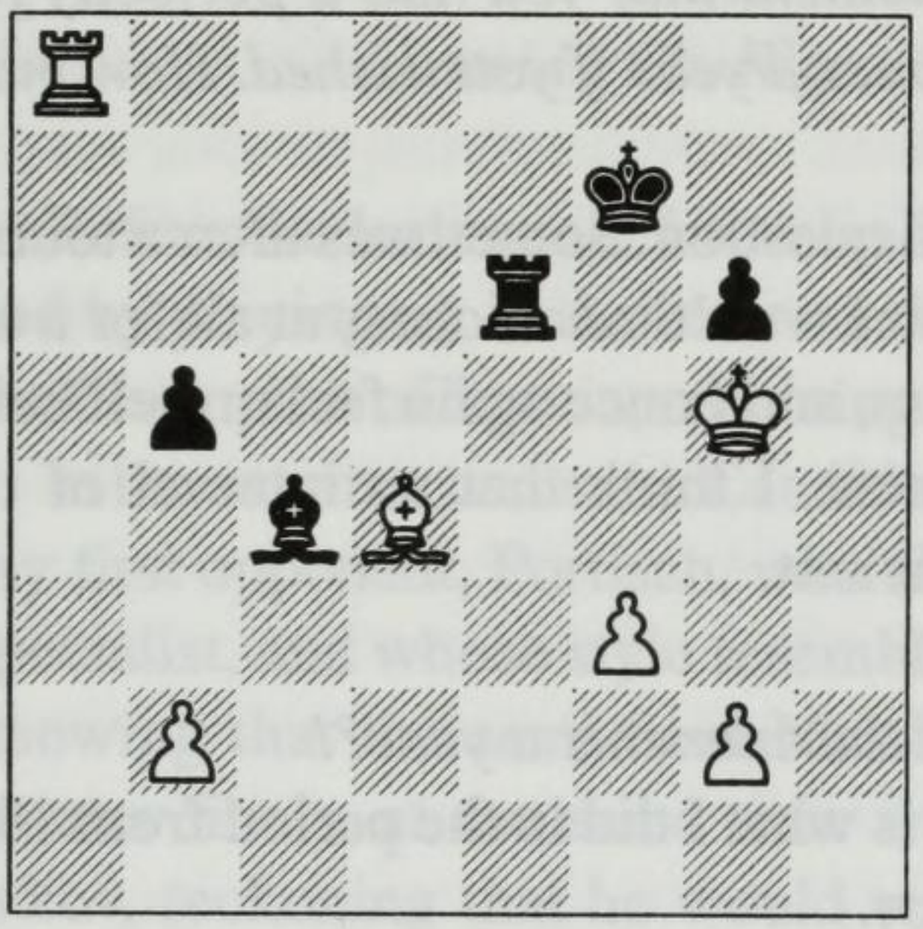
**28 ... hxg6**

Of course, 28...♖xe1+ would have drawn straight away.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **29** | **♗xf6+** | **♔g8** |
| **30** | **♖xe8** | **♖xe8** |
| **31** | **♔xh2** | **♗xc4** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **32** | **♖d7** | **♖e6!** |
| **33** | **♗c3** | **♗xa2** |
| **34** | **♖xa7** | **♗c4** |
| **35** | **♔g3** | **♗d5** |
| **36** | **f3** | **♔f8** |
| **37** | **♗d4** | **b5** |
| **38** | **♔f4** | **♗c4** |
| **39** | **♔g5** | **♔g8** |
| **40** | **♖a8+** | **♔f7** *(D)* |

*W*



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **41** | **♖a7+** | |

The sealed move. Despite the opposite-coloured bishops, Black's position is lost as it is difficult for him to repulse the combined attack of the white pieces. There followed:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **41** | **...** | **♔e8** |
| **42** | **b4** | **♗d5** |
| **43** | **♖a3** | **♔f7** |
| **44** | **g4** | **♖e2** |
| **45** | **♗c5** | **♖e5+** |
| **46** | **♔h6** | **♖e6** |
| **47** | **♖d3** | **♗c6** |
| **48** | **♖d8** | **♖e8** |
| **49** | **♖d4!** | **♖e6** |
| **50** | **f4** | **♔e8** |
| **51** | **♔g7** | **♗e4** |
| **52** | **♗b6!** | **♗f3** |
| **53** | **♖d8+** | **♔e7** |
| **54** | **♖d3** | **♗e2** |
| **55** | **♗d8+** | **♔e8** |
| **56** | **♖d2** | **♖e3** |
| **57** | **♗g5** | **♗d3** |
| **58** | **f5** | **1-0** |

# 6 Recovered

There was now a long gap in my chess time-table: the Candidates Matches were only due to begin in the summer. Both then and now I could not imagine my preparations being purely theoretical, so after a 7-year interval I decided to take part in the Latvian Championship, where I assumed the role of favourite.

JOURNALIST. *Let us suppose for the moment that you had a perfectly free choice of events, and you could play 365 games a year if you wished. How many would you play, and with what intervals?*

CHESS PLAYER. It's a purely theoretical question. Sometimes after a tournament I feel so tired that I promise myself that I won't touch chess at all for a certain length of time. But a week or 10 days pass, and I once again feel myself being drawn to the board. So after each tournament, I think that an interval of two weeks, or a maximum of three, is quite sufficient.

JOURNALIST. *So you would play in ten tournaments a year?!*

CHESS PLAYER. Well, what of it? That is what I did in the period from 1972 to 1974, and I didn't feel in the least unhappy.

JOURNALIST. *Korchnoi once wrote that to keep in good form he has to play 80 games a year...*

CHESS PLAYER. I need more. A minimum of 100, since calculating play requires constant practice, although, strange as it may seem, I am not a particularly 'calculating' player.

The first rounds of the Latvian Championship were spent 'warming up' after a long period of chess inactivity. I played quietly, with the accent on technique. This gave pleasure neither to me, nor to the fans, and I 'switched styles', after which I succeeded with several quite attractive attacks (*see next diagram*).

**20 ♘fg5 ♘d4 21 ♕e3 ♘c2 22 ♕e2 ♘xa1 23 ♘xh7!** After 23 ♖xd5 ♕xd5 24 ♘f6+ exf6, Black has more than adequate compensation for the queen. **23...♘c7** 23...♔xh7 is bad in view of 24 ♘g5+ ♔g8 25 ♗xd5 ♖d7 26 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 27 ♖xd7 ♕xd7 28 e6 ♕c6 29 exf7+ ♔f8 30 ♘e6+. **24 ♘xf8 ♕xf8 25 ♖xa1 ♕a8! 26 ♕d3 ♔f8** 26...♖xa2 27 ♖xa2 ♕xa2 fails to 28 e6!, but 26...♗c6 was better. **27 ♖d1 g5** Desperation! **28 ♗xg5 ♖xa2 29 ♘xc5! ♗xg2 30 ♕h7 ♗h3 31 ♘d7+ 1-0**, since after 31...♗xd7 32 ♗h6 he is mated.

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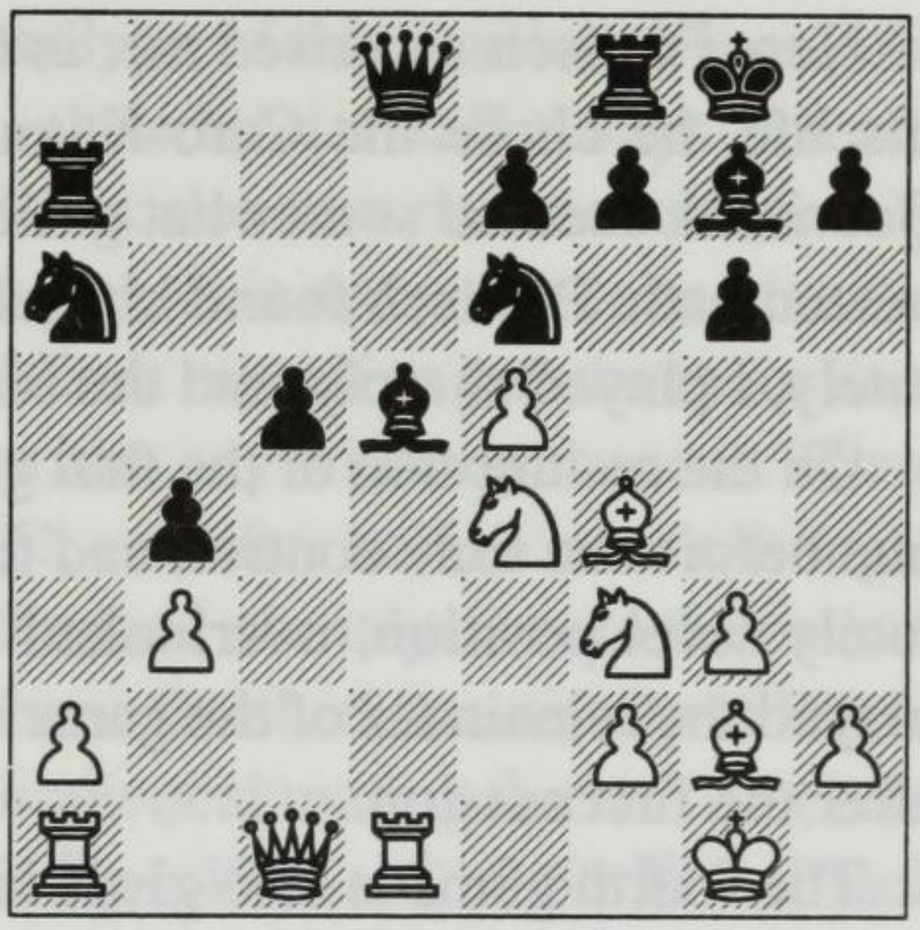


**Tal – Shmit**
*Latvian Ch, Riga 1965*

Before the last round, I was leading my closest rival, A. Gipslis, by one point, and by playing on in the last round until there were only the kings left, I became the Champion of Latvia, regaining this title after a 12-year interval.

In the summer came the Candidates Matches. We prepared very thoroughly for my first opponent, Portisch, who at that time was already considered an opening specialist, and whose style resembled that of Botvinnik. Hoping for success, and knowing that the semi-final Matches were due to begin only a week after the quarter-finals, at the same time we made some preparations for a match with Ivkov, reckoning that he would win against Larsen. Our assumption was reinforced by the recent tournament in Zagreb, where Larsen had lost some five games, including one to Ivkov in about twenty moves.

The one thing that we were somewhat guarded about was the shortness of the matches: 10 games. Up till that time I had played one match of 14 games with Saigin, and two of up to 24 games with Botvinnik. Perhaps for this reason my trainer forbade me to play the King's Indian Defence against Portisch, so as not to take an unnecessary risk, and thus find myself in the position of having to win one back. We assumed that Portisch would prepare especially thoroughly against the King's Indian. As White I decided to play only 1 e4, since against this move the Hungarian Grandmaster defended less confidently. From the creative point of view, I was quite delighted with these two matches, against Portisch and Larsen.

The first match, with Portisch, began with a score of +2 −1 =2 in my favour, and to some extent set the tone for the whole match. As Black I equalised fairly quickly, and adjourned the game in a slightly favourable ending. According to the regulations, adjournments were to be played off after every two games, and so the second game began with a certain moral advantage on my side, especially since match play has its own specific form: as White you try for success, and as Black for equality.

Here Portisch surprised me: in the second game, for evidently the first time in his life, he chose the Caro-Kann Defence. To me, such a blatant copying of Botvinnik seemed somewhat guileless, and when in my turn I avoided the well-beaten path, Portisch found himself in an unfamiliar situation. He played inaccurately, I played sharply, and the reader can see for himself how it all turned out.

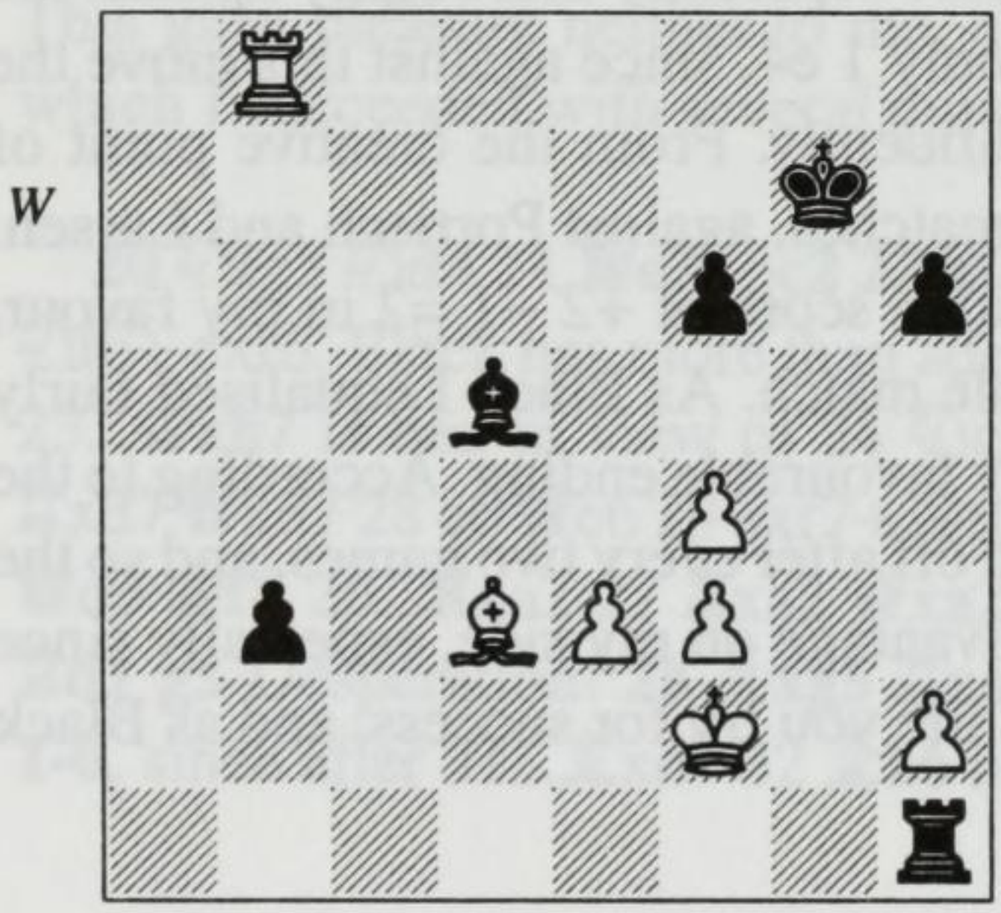
On the resumption of the first game, I missed a win on the 56th move, the last one before the time control, and then in the third game played badly in an absolutely level position, overlooked a simple manoeuvre by White, and Portisch played the remainder of the game very accurately, although it too was unfinished after the first session.

The fourth game is also given in this book, and I would merely like to give the conversation which I had with Portisch when we were analysing it afterwards. The point is that at some stage I had to choose between transposing into a technically better, perhaps even won position, with a knight on d4 against a bishop on d7 and an isolated black pawn at d5, or playing for an attack. I chose the latter. Here Portisch asked me why I hadn't played differently at this point, with ♖d3. I replied that the move hadn't even entered my head. He looked at me in astonishment, and said that I had already played this move in an earlier game. It was my turn to be astonished. 'Where? When?' 'At Curaçao, against Benko!'

Yes, Portisch had prepared conscientiously for our match.

The day finished with a score of 1-1, for straight after this game I resigned the adjournment with a quiet mind ...

It was perhaps the fifth game that proved decisive. Once again the Nimzo-Indian Defence, and a variation which was not expected of me: the only time I had played it previously was in the 1953 USSR Youth Championship. As it turned out, Portisch was 'in general' prepared for it, and it was he who surprised me by offering a sacrifice of the exchange. I found the correct reply, and a sharp ending was reached, in which, towards the time control, Portisch succeeded in outplaying me.



**Portisch – Tal**
*Candidates Match (5), Bled 1965*

Nearly two whole days were devoted to the analysis of this position. It was published in full in the Riga magazine *Shakhmaty* – the editorial staff always 'forced' its editor not only to give directional guidance, but also to write conscientiously about all the events in which he, that is I, took part. It is not possible to give the full analysis here, nor is it necessary, and I will limit myself to just the main line.

Portisch sealed **41 e4!**, the only move to give him any winning chances. There followed **41...♖xh2+ 42 ♔e3 ♗f7 43 ♖b6 ♖h5!**, and after half an hour's thought White replied **44 f5**, which forced Black from the road of analysis onto the path of improvisation. What a pity! The game could have finished beautifully if White had chosen the sharp 44 e5 fxe5 45 f5, with unequivocal mating threats. After the forced 45...♖g5! 46 ♔e4 h5 47 ♔xe5 h4 48 f4 ♖g1 49 f6+ ♔h8 50 ♖b7, Black seems to be in a very bad way, but he saves himself by tactics: 50...♖e1+ 51 ♗e4 ♖xe4+! 52 ♔xe4 h3 53 ♖b8+ ♔h7 54 ♔f3 ♔g6 55 ♖b6 ♔f5 56 ♔g3 h2 57 ♔xh2 ♔xf4 58 ♖b7 b2 59 ♖xb2 ♔f5, and a theoretically drawn position is reached, where the rook and pawn cannot win against the bishop.

After Portisch's move, the game was drawn without any particular trouble. Before the last three games I still had a lead of one point, but the previous game had evidently overtaxed Portisch, for he played without any great enthusiasm, and I won both as Black in the 7th game, and as White in the eighth. This gave me the necessary 5½ points ahead of schedule.

After a break of a week came the semi-final match. I have already said that Larsen's victory over Ivkov came as a surprise to us, and Larsen is the sort of opponent against whom one must either prepare very carefully, or else play spontaneously.

In view of the lack of time, the first variation was ruled out, and we realised that the match was going to prove very difficult, although the score from previous encounters was clearly in my favour: +3 –0 =2.

So, in an optimistic frame of mind, I played the King's Indian Defence in the first game, with the permission of my second. This attempt was to be the first and the last. It turned out that Larsen was very well prepared, and played much more strongly against me than he had against Uhlmann in the recent Zagreb Tournament. He adopted a new, very interesting order of moves, which set Black extremely complex problems. Then, however, I was surprised that, instead of deciding the game by combinative means, Larsen, contrary to his usual habit, played very reservedly, and practically allowed me to equalise. Here I began to think of more, remembered the score of our previous encounters, and after missing good drawing chances, once again got into a lost position. Larsen was once again unhurried, but this time inexorable. I postponed my resignation until the day the game was resumed.

The following day the unexpected happened. Larsen decided to play too openly for a draw. The fact is that there are very many players in the world who can play for a win, but very few who can draw to order, especially as Black. Larsen certainly cannot be considered one of them, and the penultimate game of the Ivkov-Larsen match is a further indication of this.

What became of Larsen's desire can be seen from the game, which is given here in the book. Thus the score became 1-1. Then came two draws, one of which, the 4th game, affected me badly, and left its mark on my play in the 5th game.

In the match with Ivkov, Larsen had adopted the Alekhine Defence in one game, and it had also occurred in his previous games. In our game, after **1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5** To some extent a Larsen patent **5 ♘xe5**, he suddenly played **5...♘d7**. If this had been in a simultaneous display, I would have decided that my opponent had simply overlooked the stroke 6 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 7 ♕h5+, when, against his will, the black king is forced to go for a walk.

Larsen could not have missed this, and I began examining the possible variations, which were, of course, pretty complicated. Intuition kept telling me that the sacrifice could not be incorrect. However, I decided to calculate everything 'as far as mate', studied one variation, a second, a third ... 50 minutes went by in this way, and most of the time was spent in searching for a defence for Larsen, whom I nevertheless trusted. Finally, in one of the innumerable variations, I naturally succeeded in finding something resembling a defence.

Of course, the position did not require such consideration. Either my opponent's 'offer' should have been immediately declined, or else the problem should have been tackled without prejudice, and the knight sacrificed at f7. In fact I rejected the sacrifice after prolonged thought, and this was a psychological blunder, for even after I had gained the advantage, my thoughts kept returning to the 'critical' position. Somewhere in the middle of the game, I suddenly came to the conclusion that in a variation I had examined, and which I had thought to be in Black's favour, White in fact gains a decisive advantage. This I could not endure, and I played the second part of the game aimlessly, which led after 40 moves to a lost ending. Then I had to seal my move. I thought for over half an hour, I even wanted to resign, but Larsen was no longer on the stage.

In a gloomy mood we sat down to analyse, and began with the position after ... Black's 5th move. We convinced ourselves that 6 ♘xf7 would have given White a very strong attack, and went on to the adjourned position. Considering it to be hopeless, we lazily moved the pieces about. At about three in the morning, owing to Koblents's extreme tiredness, I managed to draw a couple of times, and I joked that now Larsen would be unable to win the ending. Thus a small though, to be honest, rather dubious degree of optimism arose.

In addition, however, at some stage play could transpose into an ending, very slightly similar to the games Botvinnik-Fischer and Portisch-Tal, where separated pawns successfully fought against two connected passed pawns in a rook ending. This also gave us a certain amount of hope.

Nevertheless, what saved me was no doubt the fact that Larsen thought that he could win the game just as he pleased. At the decisive moment Black's eyes were 'dazzled', and when the second time control was reached at move 56, the position was already drawn.

The game as a whole somehow unsettled me, and for the fifth game I extracted from my arsenal the Grünfeld Defence, which I had prepared for the match with Portisch. I have always liked it in a platonic way, but previously I had played it only a few times, and with no great success.

Although, as the game went, I could have gained equality without difficulty, I once again began dreaming of more, which finally led to a retreat. On this occasion Larsen demonstrated his technical ability, and to adjourn the game seemed improper. Thus Larsen went into the lead.

On the day before the sixth game, Larsen's wife, who was able to affect Bent's mood like no one else, left Yugoslavia. Whether it was for this reason or some other is not clear, but the score was immediately levelled (the game is given here) and the tension reached breaking point.

The seventh was, in my opinion, the most interesting, sharp and fruitful game of the match, though it was not without its mistakes. Larsen did not gain any opening advantage, and got into serious time-trouble, in which I became nervous, and for some unknown reason rejected the win of a piece. Then one of us blundered, the other returned the compliment, and we adjourned the game, so as to resume it, according to the schedule, after the 8th game.

In analysis we found that, practically by force, an ending could be reached with rook and pawn against knight and pawn. In Averbakh's book on the endgame, we found exactly this position, with the diagnosis – draw, and began looking to see how we could avoid it. Suddenly I thought of an idea by which we might disprove Averbakh. After long searching we decided that we had managed to do this.

This meant that in the three remaining games, in two of which I had the white pieces, I could play calmly! I adjourned the 8th game with a purely symbolic advantage, which was impossible to realise, and then resumed the 7th game. It turned out that, after all, it was not so simple to refute the theoretical findings, and as a result the score remained level.

Thus we were back where we started, and everything depended on the last two games. And if the score should be 1-1? The seconds and the chief controller, the likeable and witty Austrian Dorazil, discussed this, for the moment theoretical but

perfectly real possibility. They could not come to an agreement (playing to the first win was not practised at that time in the Candidates matches, and first occurred 9 years later in a Ladies' Match) and so Dorazil made the following suggestion:

'It will all be very simple. I will stand Larsen and Tal side by side, and give each of them a sheep's bone, and then bring in my dog. The one he goes up to will go through to the final!!'

The controller's decision was 'accepted' with delight, and play continued.

The 9th game also proved to be dramatic. At the board I found an important rejoinder to an opening surprise (at least, that is what it was for me) by Larsen, and by about move 15 already considered that I could play for a win. In addition, Larsen once again spent a great deal of time in thought.

Here nerves came into the act. At first I committed some inaccuracies, and then in Larsen's time-trouble made such a move that my position immediately became hopeless. When, after the game, Koblents asked Larsen to comment on the move 24...g5, the Dane replied:

'For several minutes I thought that Tal had gone mad!'

Indeed, there is no other word for this move but mad. Larsen immediately gained a menacing attack, and after the time-scramble and its inevitable slips, we adjourned the game in an ending which was inferior, and most probably lost for me. Larsen was a pawn ahead with a good position, and could do what he liked.

The one thing that we were able to find in analysis was a rather simple trap. Larsen fell into it! Although the adventures did not end there, and we both in turn made further mistakes, a theoretically drawn ending was reached.

Thus before the last game I had an advantage not only in the form of the white pieces, but also in that my spirits were raised. Besides, at that time I had faith in my ability to play decisive games.

The reader can see for himself how the battle was decided.

I must admit that I returned home in high spirits, although they could have been dampened by the fact that in the final I had to meet Boris Spassky, against whom the chess score was far from in my favour.

JOURNALIST. *Incidentally, which of the Candidates would you have preferred to meet in the final?*

CHESS PLAYER. If one goes by bare arithmetic, I had a plus score against Geller and Smyslov. As they had already played each other in the quarter-finals, the chance of me meeting a 'pleasant' opponent was not all that high.

JOURNALIST. *You are, after all, of an emotional nature, but in matches you see before you the same face, day after day ...*

CHESS PLAYER. It is for this reason that even now I prefer tournaments. Even if, in a match, my opponent's face is the most likeable.

Before describing the match in Tbilisi, I must 'complain' that my preparations for it were ruined by medical considerations. The doctors discovered something completely imaginary (as it later turned out) in my lungs, and virtually insisted that I should be sent to the Crimea. In addition, they stated categorically that the match should take place only in Yalta. I flatly refused to agree to this, since after a very friendly correspondence with Spassky, I had suggested Tbilisi, and he had agreed. I have no doubt that Boris would have come to Yalta if I had asked him to, but to play in a sanatorium ... Ugh!

Prior to the match, Koblents came to Yalta, along with L. Shamkovich, who also helped me in my preparations. Occupied with all kinds of medical procedures, I did not spend a great deal of time at the board. In addition, it was only later that I realised that all this endless manipulation and swallowing of medicines did not exactly assist the development of my creative fantasy, or even put me in a good frame of mind.

Then the match started. The first game straight away featured an interesting move by Spassky, for whom the three encounters of 1965, and the four (including the match with Petrosian) of 1968/9 were to be the summit of his achievements. This glory must rightly be shared with I. Bondarevsky, an excellent trainer, who not only keenly senses the nuances of a position, but also the psychological condition of his protégé and the opponent.

The interesting 'move' made by Spassky was to play the Marshall Attack in the Ruy Lopez, and not just this by itself, but also the treatment given to the attack by Spassky and Bondarevsky: giving up a pawn to avoid a sharp calculating struggle.

So, at the very start of the match, Boris gained the initiative for a pawn, and at the same time a solid position. I attempted to shake his position, and was successful, although analysis later revealed that White had in fact played too riskily. I obtained the better ending, and had I continued to conduct the game strategically I would have had quite good winning chances. However, a combination with a purely study-like idea cropped up, and without hesitation I temporarily sacrificed a piece, which, after Spassky's precise and simple reply, gave me only a useless extra pawn in an ending with opposite-coloured bishops.

In the second game Spassky, who like myself plays less strongly at the beginning of an event, miscalculated in a sharp position, and came out a pawn down, and I won.

JOURNALIST. *I have a photograph from the beginning of the third game. Spassky is sitting at the board, bent low and ready to spring, as it were. He is a*

*picture of self-discipline, of a man striving to go forward. You are quite placidly leaning back in your chair ... is it possible that the third game, and the match as a whole, was lost not by a chess player to a chess player, but by an athlete to an athlete?*

CHESS PLAYER. Very possible! Although it would seem that psychologically I lost the match somewhat later.

In the third game, Spassky avoided the Marshall Attack, for which we had prepared. White should nevertheless have obtained a slight but comfortable and lasting opening advantage, but I simply played the moves in the wrong order. The game went into an equal ending, and I offered a draw. It was only after the match that I found out that Bondarevsky had given Spassky strict instructions to play on in such positions 'until Tal was sick of them'. The shrewd trainer was right: on receiving a refusal and after some further 'moving about', I began to create difficulties for myself, and adjourned the game a pawn down, although the draw had not yet been thrown away.

The resumption took place the following day. Here again Spassky and Bondarevsky chose exactly the same unhurried tactics – no forced variations! I had not the time left to do this – the previous day I had used up half an hour on my clock. Here I worked out a long study-like variation, and reached a position where Spassky would have a king and queen against my king and a pawn on f7. And I boldly went in for it. But when this position was just about to be reached, I realised that my king would not be on g8, which would have given the draw, but on e8, and that when I queened the pawn I would be mated. I was forced to change course, but for this it was already too late.

After the quiet fourth game, before which Spassky gave me a present – it was played on my birthday – Spassky once again played the Marshall Attack, committed an inaccuracy, and I obtained by force an ending which was highly unpleasant for Black. Instead of playing 'à la Spassky', and gradually realising my extra pawn over a large number of moves, I was once again tempted by some concrete variations, exchanged all four rooks, and then realised that in the resulting ending with opposite-coloured bishops there was no longer a win.

When, in the sixth game, by utilising one of his opening weapons, Spassky just as quickly took play into an outwardly harmless, but in fact slightly favourable ending for White, my nerves once again could not stand the strain. Instead of equalising accurately, I 'rushed' things, both of Spassky's rooks penetrated onto the eighth rank and we thought that the adjourned position was lost.

The one slim hope was that, if Spassky had sealed the most natural move, then by a tactical stroke I could exchange a pair of rooks, and although my position would remain unpleasant, the draw would be there.

Strange as it may seem, it was just this move that Boris sealed! He then 'tormented' me for quite a long time (this followed from his tactics in the match) but without result.

Here it was that I made a mistake. I was advised to avoid 1 e4 for the moment, especially since I had prepared for many of Spassky's favourite schemes against 1 d4, but I became obstinate. Besides, I was subconsciously counting on Spassky's former inability to play decisive games (which had more than once let Boris down), and I set myself the goal of maintaining the equilibrium until the penultimate 11th game. So, I thought, let him once again play the Marshall Attack, even though I had not achieved anything against it so far! He played it, and what's more found an improvement on his previous play, and deliberately took play into a slightly inferior ending. However, the tactics planned by Spassky and his trainer justified themselves. I gradually 'converted' the favourable ending into one that was not altogether comfortable, but on resumption nevertheless held the draw.

In the eighth game Boris played slackly, and Black quickly equalised. Perhaps if there had been two more draws, then Spassky would have cracked, but it was I who did so first. In the ninth game I made the half-hearted decision to play 1 e4, but not allow the Marshall Attack. Boris played inaccurately, and White gained a considerable advantage, but in striving for the 'planned' fifth point I got carried away. I began to demand too much from myself, and what is more important, from the position, and instead of first ensuring the safety of my king, I moved my rook off somewhere and gave Spassky counterplay which he utilised splendidly. As a result the game was adjourned in a lost position. Acting unhurriedly, and in exaggeratedly academic fashion, Spassky realised his advantage.

The situation had now changed sharply. There were only three games to go to the finish, in which I would have White in only one, and I had to win back a point.

In the tenth game, as early as the 3rd(!) move, Boris demonstrated his unwillingness to get mixed up in anything at all risky, and instead it was I who did this. I played unevenly, and badly, and the score became 6-4 in Spassky's favour.

As Spassky later told me, before the eleventh game, and also during it, he was very nervous, but this did not prevent him from playing his best game of the match. I organised a typical football 'pile-up' on the black king's position, but gave up as lost the queenside and the centre. This neglect of prophylaxis did not go unpunished, and the match concluded.

After this I went to see the Tbilisi doctors, where I found out that, firstly, intense doses of all sorts of medicine do not go unnoticed either by the kidneys or by the nerves, and secondly, that I was, according to the doctors, perfectly

healthy! I could only regret that the discussion between the physicians from Riga and Tbilisi, which concluded in a victory for the latter and for me, had not taken place a few months earlier.

Game 62

**Tal – Zhuravlev**

*Latvian Championship, Riga 1965*

Old Indian Defence

I will not hide the fact that before the start of this game I was nervous. The last time I had taken part in the Latvian Championship was seven years previously, since when I had had practically no encounters at the chessboard with our best players. Meanwhile, the class of their play had markedly risen. It is not just a joke that in 1958 many participants were trying to reach the candidate master norm, whereas now the norm had been set for obtaining the title of master. One of the seekers of this title happened to be my opponent in the first round.

Of course, my participation in the Championship of the Republic was purely for training purposes, in particular for working on my opening repertoire and on the question of 'time'. Many observers criticised me (and not without reason) for the fact that sometimes I play too quickly, and at other times with the speed of an express tortoise.

In the Championship of the Republic I took the advice of D. Bronstein: to note down the time taken over each move during the game. I think that this additional information can help disclose the course of the players' thoughts during the game.

**1 c4** *(0.01)*

It is curious, but until 1963 I was not such an ardent supporter of the move 1 e4. After the Petrosian-Botvinnik match, on which I had to commentate, I took to commencing all my games (apart from two it seems) in this way, perhaps as a protest against the fact that for two months 1 e4 was not once played. However, to be honest, in two years one can become tired of this also.

**1 ... e5** *(0.04)*

**2 ♘c3** *(0.01)* **♘f6** *(0.05)*

**3 g3** *(0.02)* **c6** *(0.22)*

What was Black thinking about for 17 minutes? Perhaps he was refreshing his memory of the sharp variations associated with the move in the game, or perhaps he was occupied with psychological considerations. I have highly unpleasant recollections of the move 3...c6 in connection with a terrible opening rout inflicted on me by Botvinnik in the 9th game of our return match in 1961.

**4 ♘f3** *(0.03)* **d6** *(0.25)*

More critical is 4...e4 5 ♘d4, and now either 5...d5 or 5...♕b6. The move made by Zhuravlev leads to a variation which gives Black a solid but rather unpromising game.

**5 ♗g2** *(0.05)* **♗e7** *(0.27)*

Black finally decides against a King's Indian set-up.

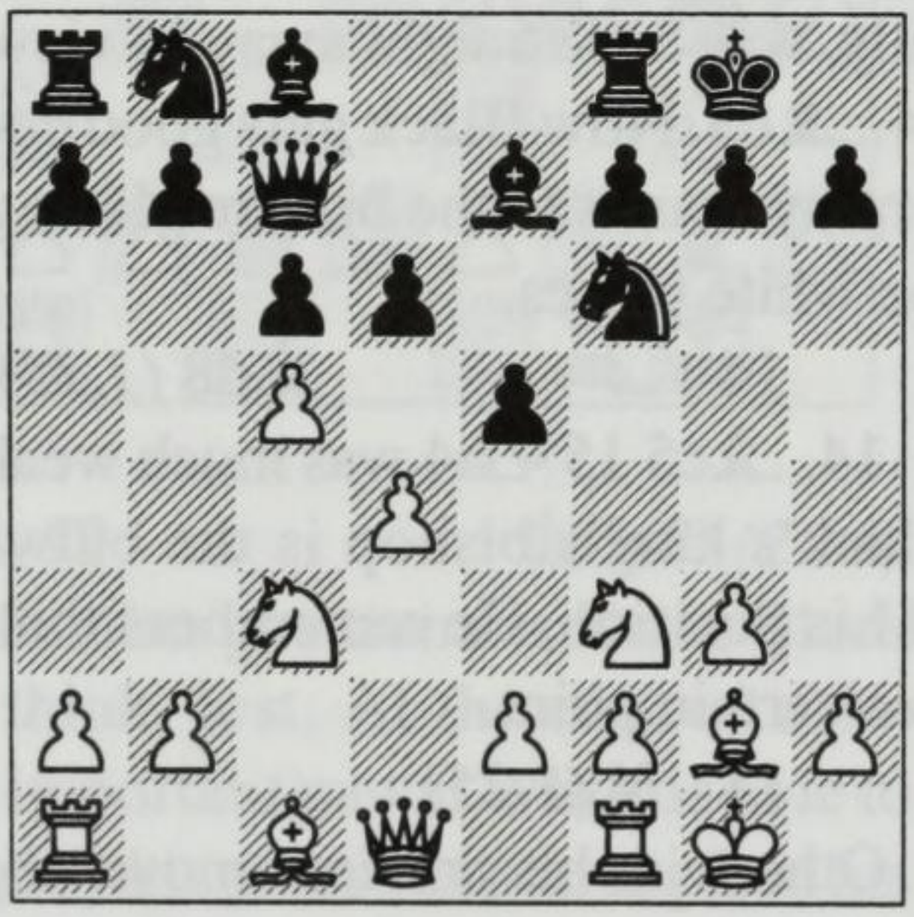
**6 0-0** *(0.07)* **0-0** *(0.27)*

**7 d4** *(0.07)* **♕c7** *(0.32)*

7...♘bd7 looks more normal. After some quiet reply by White (8 b3, 8 e4) there would simply have been a transposition of moves, since the place for the queen in this variation is on c7. I wanted somehow to punish my opponent for his opening liberty, and so there followed ...

**8 c5?!** *(0.15)(D)*

White immediately starts a fight in the centre, but this does not bring him any particular advantage. As my opponent rightly said after the game: Black has done nothing wrong, so why this move all of a sudden?! True, he now has to play carefully. Bad is 8...dxc5 9 dxe5 or 8...exd4 9 cxd6 ♗xd6 10 ♘xd4 ♖d8 11 ♕c2 with a marked positional advantage for White (11...♗xg3 12 hxg3 ♖xd4 fails to 13 ♘b5).



*B*

**8 ... ♘bd7** *(0.42)*

**9 cxd6** *(0.16)* **♗xd6** *(0.43)*

**10 ♗g5** *(0.17)*

This move is by analogy with the well-known variation of the Ruy Lopez 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 0-0 8 c3 d6 9 h3 ♘b8 10 d4 ♘bd7 11 c4 c6 12 c5 ♕c7 13 cxd6 ♗xd6 14 ♗g5; it is curious how opening ideas repeat themselves. Now Black has to meet the positional threat of 11 dxe5, after which he either has significantly to spoil his kingside, or else part with his king's bishop, when, in an open position, the white bishops on g2 and, say, f4 will be highly unpleasant 'observers' of the queenside. This threat can be met by 10...h6, after which Black need not fear 11 dxe5 ♗xe5 12 ♘xe5 because of 12...hxg5 when the pawn on g5 helps him to complete his development successfully. I was intending 12 ♗d2, so as to begin active operations on the kingside (12...♗d6 13 ♖c1, forcing 13...♕b8).

**10 ... ♗e7** *(0.48)*

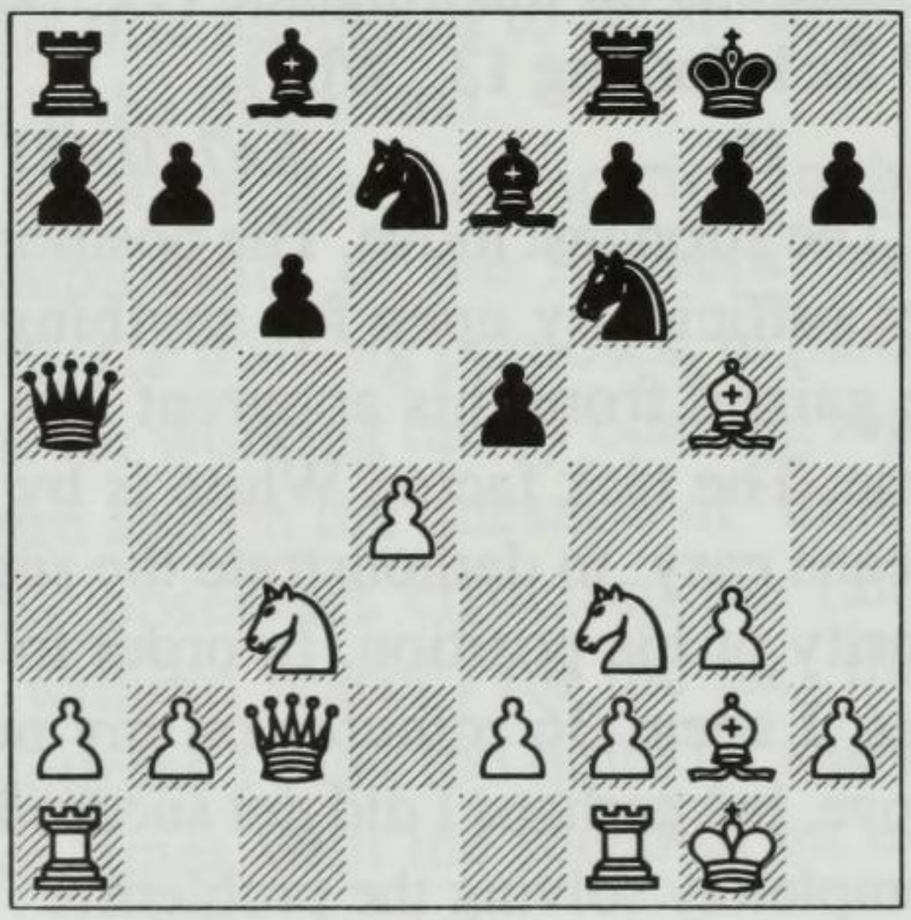
The strongest move. The position is not sufficiently open for anything to be gained from this apparent loss of time. The task facing White is by no means easy: to demonstrate the superiority of his position. In order to do this, I spent 36 minutes on my next move, but perhaps I did not succeed in completely solving the problem?!

**11 ♕c2** *(0.53)*

White's aim is to prevent the exchange on d4 followed by ...♘e5, after which Black has an easy game. In view of this the plausible 11 ♖c1 is

weaker, since after the equally plausible move 11...♕a5 the 'development' of White's rook is seen to be no use at all. Players with inclinations towards technique might have decided on the manoeuvre 11 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 12 d5, but I could not find anything concrete after either the simple 12...cxd5 13 ♘xd5 ♕d8 14 ♘d2 (or 14 ♖c1 ♘b6) ♘b6, or 12...♘b6, allowing the advance of the pawn. After lengthy reflection I decided on the move 11 ♕c2, firstly since I had a vague picture of the variation which was to occur in the game, secondly from general considerations (White is trying to establish a knight on f5 and he frees the square d1 for a rook), and thirdly since I was intending to weigh up once more an unusual possibility (cf. the note to White's 12th move).

**11 ... ♕a5** *(1.00)(D)*



**12 ♗d2** *(1.10)*

Once again White thought for a considerable time, although 11...♕a5 could not have been unexpected. Over and over White worked through the variation 12 a3 exd4 13 b4 ♕b6 14 ♘a4 ♕b5 15 h4! This is the point – the black queen is prevented from taking up a favourable post on h5. In the end I rejected this possibility because of 15...c5 16 ♖ab1 d3! 17 exd3 cxb4 18 axb4 ♘e5, when the weakening of the white king's pawn cover could play a significant role in such an open position. Perhaps I should have played this, since subsequently I was to take measures that were even more double-edged.

**12 ... exd4** *(1.25)*

This seems to me to be a waste of time on Black's clock. It is clear that he must play this, and only this.

**13 ♘xd4** *(1.10)* **♕h5** *(1.28)*

**14 ♘f5** *(1.24)*

Black only needs to play his knight to e5 for all his difficulties to be behind him. White decides to prevent this in the most radical way, by placing his pawn on f4, which, incidentally, was bad straight away in view of 14...♗c5. Now Black gets good counterplay thanks to the bizarre placing of the white pieces.

**14 ... ♗d8** *(1.35)*

14...♗c5 15 ♘a4 was much weaker. Black's king's bishop is the bulwark of his position. He remembers this up to a certain point.

**15 f4** *(1.25)*

Otherwise his previous move would be simply a waste of time. Now complications suddenly set in.

**15 ... g6!** *(1.52)*

The most accurate. The preparatory 15...♗b6+ gets Black nowhere after 16 e3, while on 15...♘b6, 16 e4 is possible, not allowing the black queen out of the 'chamber'.

**16 ♘h4** *(1.26)*

16 ♘d6? ♕c5+.

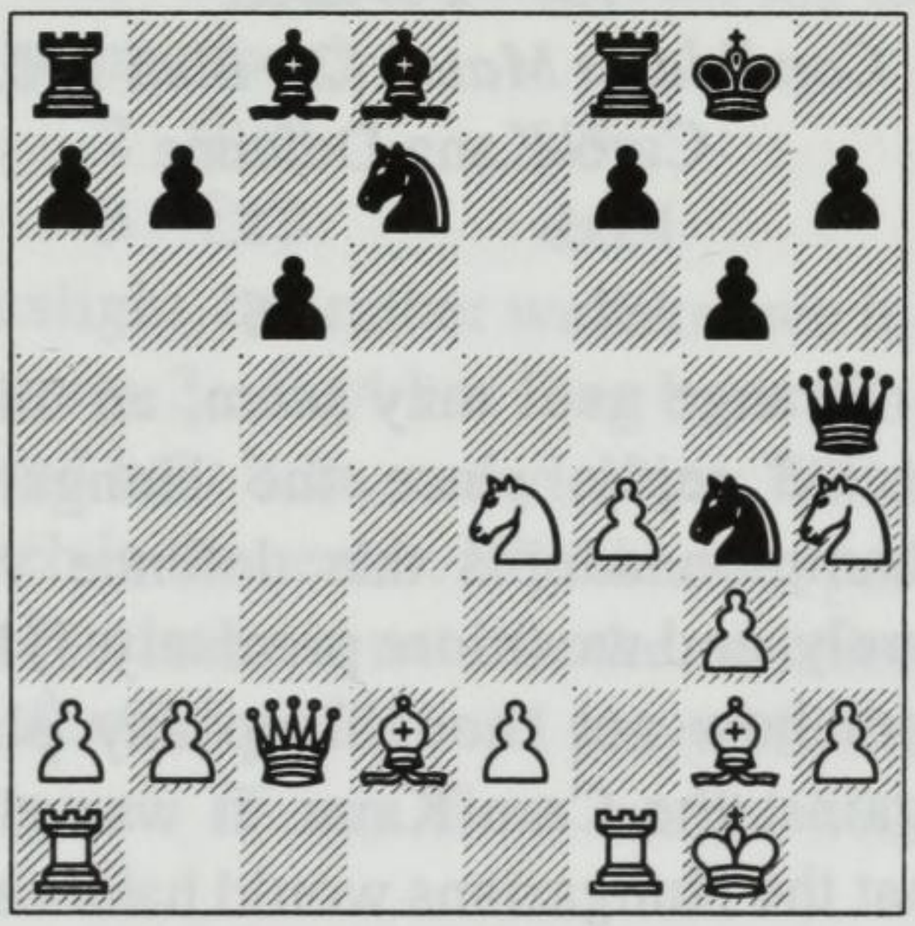
**16 ... ♘g4** *(1.55)*

After 16...♕c5+ 17 ♔h1 ♘g4 18 ♘f3 ♘f2+?? 19 ♖xf2 ♕xf2 20 e3 Black would simply succeed in trapping his queen.

**17 ♘e4** *(1.29)(D)*

It was on this move that White had based his calculations. On 17 ♘f3 Black could have won the exchange without any great fear: 17...♗b6+ 18 ♔h1 ♘f2+.

*B*



**17 ... ♗xh4?** *(2.14)*

After this positional mistake Black is, I think, lost. At the cost of a not very important pawn, White is able to redeploy his pieces and strengthen his kingside. The opening of the g-file, as the further course of the game shows, is also in his favour, and, what is most important, Black parts with his dark-squared bishop, which was very necessary to him both for the defence of his king, and for counter-attack (the diagonal a7-g1). At the board I was afraid of the positional move 17...♘df6, which in effect completes his development. My opponent did not like the fact that after 18 ♘g5 his queen has a number of unfriendly neighbours, but they could have been driven away by the logical 18...h6. I was intending to continue 18 ♘c5, but after the logical 18...♘d5! Black's chances are at any rate not worse.

**18 gxh4** *(1.30)* **♕xh4** *(2.20)*

18...♕f5 was more stubborn, but Black decided to 'suffer for his cause'.

**19 h3** *(1.30)* **♘gf6** *(2.21)*

**20 ♘g5** *(1.32)*

Here the knight is, for the moment, invulnerable. Black cannot play 20...h6 21 ♗e1 ♕h5 22 ♗f3. He attempts, at last, to develop his queenside pieces.

**20 ... ♘b6** *(2.24)*

**21 e4** *(1.35)* **♗e6** *(2.25)*

**22 ♗c3** *(1.38)* **♘fd7** *(2.26)*

White's attack on the kingside is gradually accelerating. Its leader is the bishop on c3, which does not have an opposite number. In such a position there is no need to hurry unduly.

**23 ♖ad1** *(1.50)*

At any rate keeping the knight at d7 under fire. White provokes ...♖ad8, which in certain variations leaves Black's a-pawn undefended. We will see within a few moves why this is necessary.

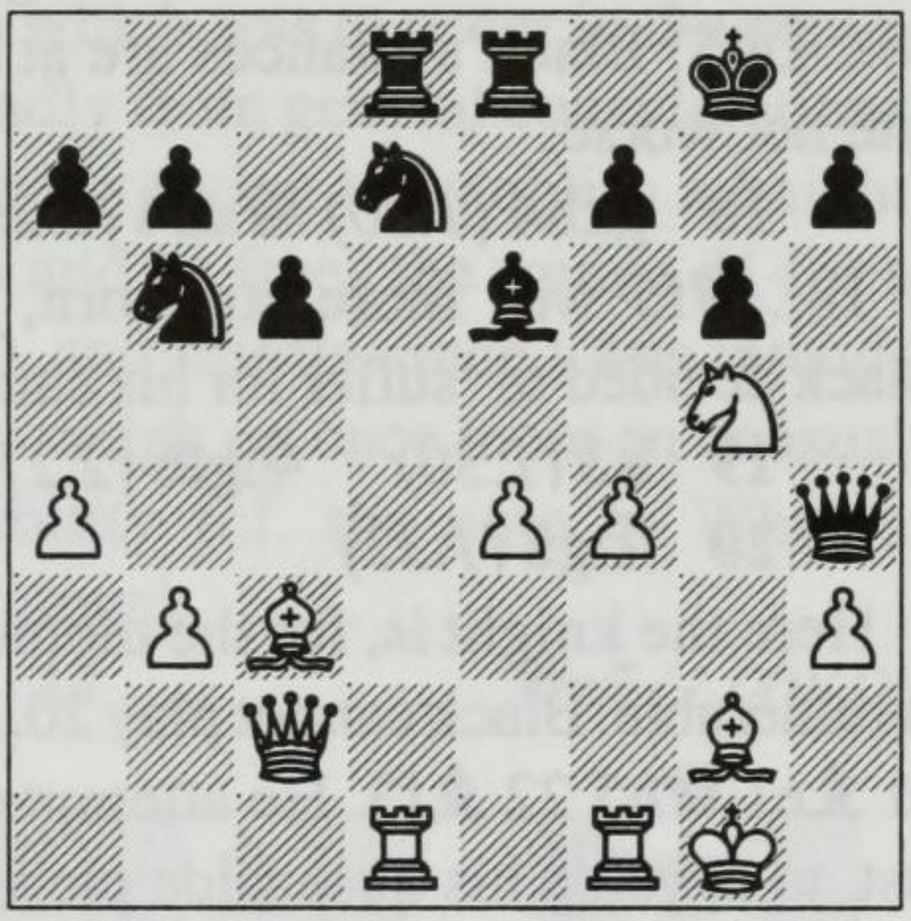
**23 ... ♖ad8** *(2.27)*

Better chances were offered by 23...♗c4 in the hope of 24 ♗e1 ♕h6 25 ♖xd7? ♗xf1. I was intending to play simply 25 ♖f2, keeping in reserve the threat of ♖xd7, and then once again driving away Black's pieces by b3. It would not be out of place to mention that at this point Zhuravlev was in severe time-trouble.

**24 b3!** *(1.53)* **♖fe8** *(2.28)*

**25 a4!** *(1.54) (D)*

*B*



It turns out that Black's queenside defences are also very precarious. Black cannot now play 25...f6 26 ♗e1 ♕h6 27 ♘xe6 ♖xe6 28 a5 ♘a8 29 ♕c4 ♘c7 30 f5, and in place of one 'diagonal' misfortune comes another, greater one. This same motif also occurs two moves later.

**25 ... ♕h6** *(2.29)*

**26 a5** *(1.56)* **♘c8** *(2.29)*

**27 ♗b2** *(1.57)*

Threatening 28 ♕c3. Since 27...f6 is still not possible, Black brings his queen back.

**27 ... ♕f8** *(2.29)*

Trying to gain time by the threat of 28...♕c5+, but now White's knight no longer needs to be defended, which gives him a new and very attractive possibility.

**28 f5** *(1.58)* **gxf5** *(2.29)*

**29 exf5** *(1.58)* **♗d5** *(2.29)*

**30 ♗xd5** *(1.59)* **cxd5** *(2.29)*

**31 ♕g2** *(2.00)*

In addition to the long diagonal, White has also acquired undisputed possession of the g-file. It is clear that Black cannot withstand this.

**31 ... ♕c5+** *(2.29)*

**32 ♗d4** *(2.00)* **1-0**

## Game 63
## **Tal – Portisch**
*Candidates Match (2), Bled 1965*
Caro-Kann Defence

**1 e4 c6**

Strange as it may seem, an unexpected reply, since the Hungarian champion adopts this defence very rarely, and we (more precisely, I) had somehow not thought up any plans against the Caro-Kann. It was clear that the Hungarians would have carefully studied the games from my matches with Botvinnik, and therefore, without any prepared 'mines', it would be inexpedient to choose the variations with 7 h4 (2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♗f5 5 ♘g3 ♗g6 6 ♘1e2 ♘f6) or 4 h4 (3 e5 ♗f5). After Portisch's first move I feverishly began to recall which variations I had not yet

adopted in tournaments. To my aid came reminiscences as a trainer. Last year in the USSR Ladies' Championship I assisted Zara Nakhimovskaya, and since the Riga lady, in answer to 1 e4, plays only 1...c6, we studied the various systems of the Caro-Kann literally for a whole day. As it happened, Konoplyeva chose the line 2 ♘c3 d5 3 ♘f3. From the opening Nakhimovskaya obtained an excellent position, but all the time I felt that somewhere White could have played better (although, of course, I did not mention this to Zara). It was now that I remembered this. In the end, I decided, Portisch has played less games with the Caro-Kann than Nakhimovskaya (I hope that they will both excuse me for this comparison).

**2 ♘c3 d5**
**3 ♘f3 dxe4**

A slight, but rather well-known inaccuracy. 3...♗g4 has long been considered best here, not yielding White an inch in the centre. Who knows, perhaps Portisch did not like the variation 4 h3 ♗xf3 5 gxf3!? as I played in the 3rd game of my first match with Botvinnik.

**4 ♘xe4 ♗g4**
**5 h3 ♗xf3**
**6 ♕xf3 ♘d7**
**7 d4 ♘gf6**
**8 ♗d3 ♘xe4**
**9 ♕xe4 e6**
**10 0-0**

More precise, perhaps, was 10 c3 so as, when the queen is attacked, to be able to retreat it to e2. White, however, has something else in mind.

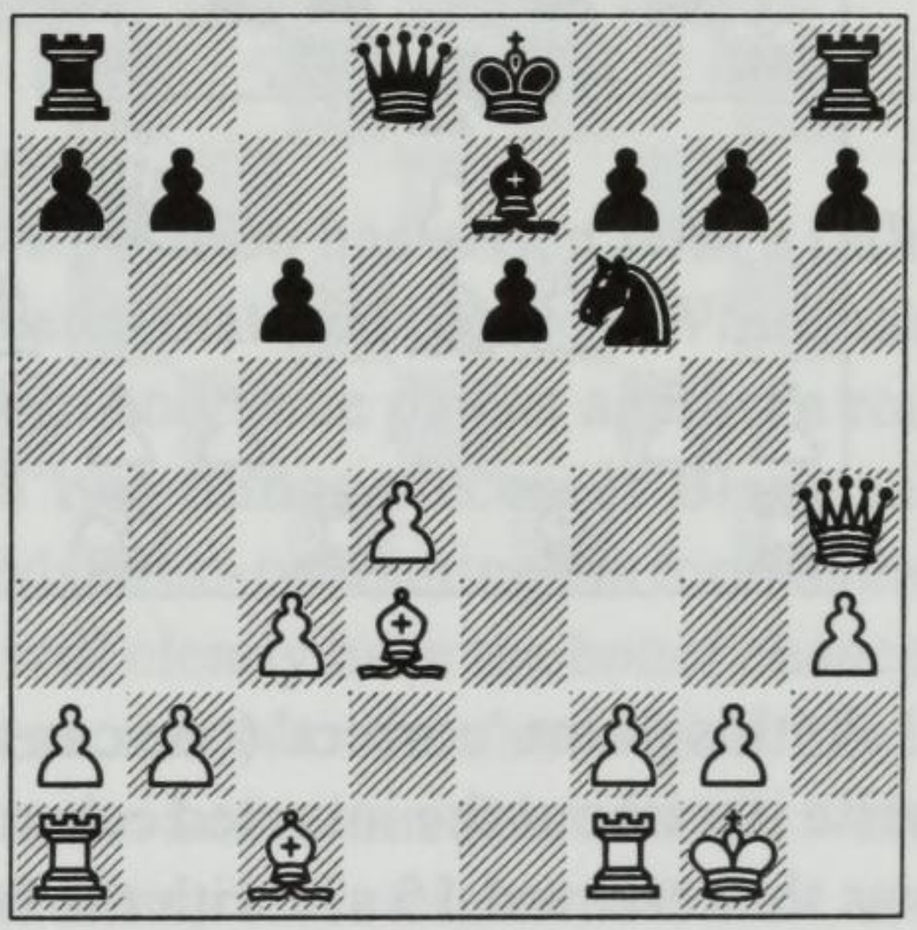
**10 ... ♗e7**

Portisch does not hurry to play ...♘f6.

**11 c3 ♘f6**
**12 ♕h4** *(D)*

After 12 ♕e2 White has a slight, but indisputable, positional advantage. I wished to lure the knight onto d5 from where it is unable to take up the good defensive post f8. However, this is achieved at the cost of several tempi and Black has time to stabilise the position.

*B*



**12 ... ♘d5**
**13 ♕g4 ♗f6**

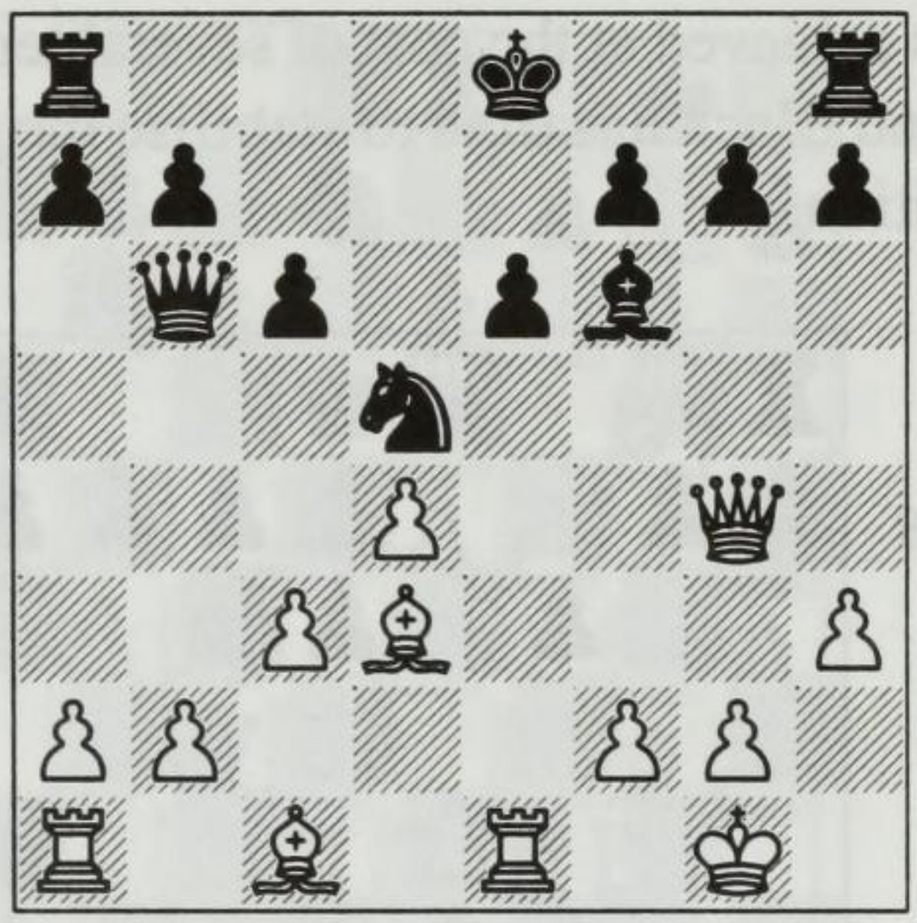
Avoiding the obvious trap 13...0-0? 14 ♗h6 ♗f6 15 ♕e4.

**14 ♖e1**

At first I had intended to complete the queen manoeuvre by 14 ♕e4 so as to keep the black king in the centre, but then I noticed that after 14...♘e7! White's initiative would soon evaporate.

Allowing Black to castle is by no means evidence of White's good nature; after 14...0-0 he carries out a favourable regrouping of his pieces by 15 ♗h6 ♖e8 16 ♖ad1 ♕b6 17 ♗c1, and the bishop returns to what is perhaps its best position, while the rook is actively placed in the centre. Portisch prevents the development of White's queenside, by playing ...

**14 ... ♕b6** *(D)*



At this point 'correct' (one can also write it without the inverted commas) was the reserved 15 a3, with the hope of exploiting the famous pair of bishops in a protracted struggle. Before the match we had noticed that the Hungarian Grandmaster has an excellent feel for the most subtle strategic nuances but reacts less confidently to sudden tactical turns. This, and also the fact that the black king has stood with impunity in the centre of the board for 14 moves, provoked the following reaction.

**15 c4!?**

This looks like a blunder – after the natural ...

**15 ... ♘b4**

... White's bishop and his central pawn are attacked. On 15...♘e7 I was planning 16 d5! cxd5 17 cxd5 ♘xd5 18 ♕a4+, at any rate preventing Black from castling.

**16 ♖xe6+**

The only continuation to justify his previous move.

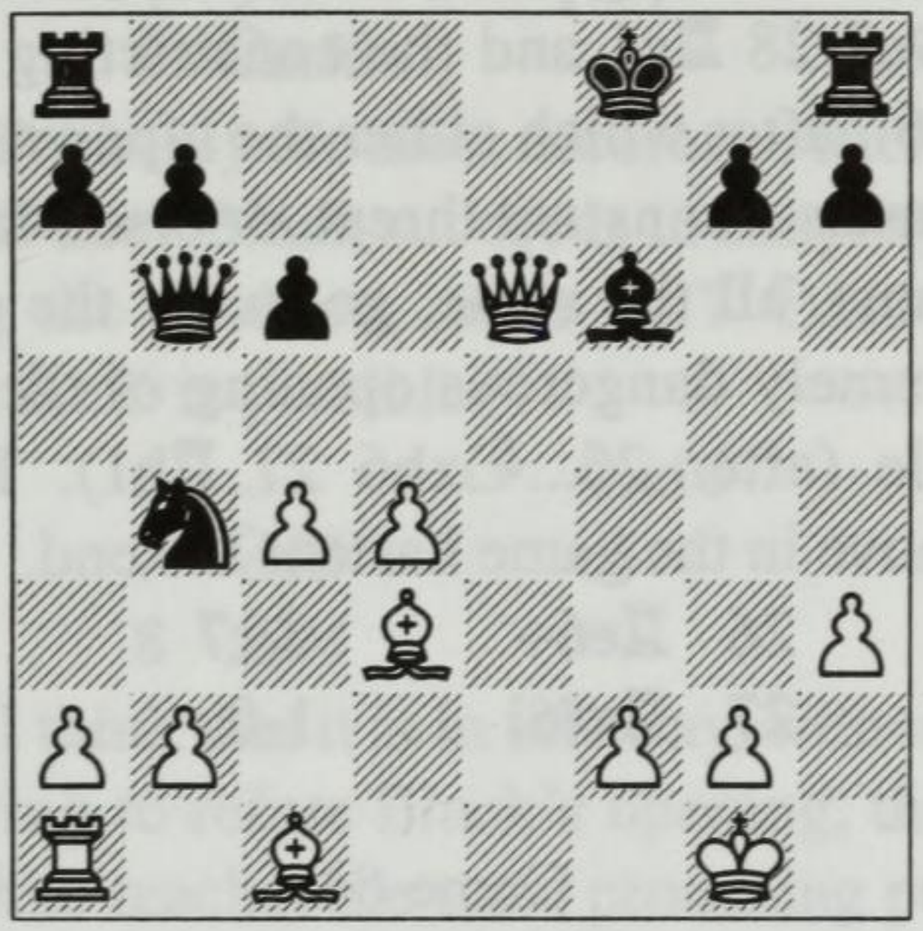
**16 ... fxe6**

**17 ♕xe6+**

Here Black was faced with the problem: how to punish the opponent for his recklessness. It is clear that this is least of all achieved by 17...♔d8 – White can play 18 ♕d6+ ♔e8 19 ♕e6+ etc. Neither during the game, nor after it, could I find anything better for White. My hopes were chiefly associated with the 'refutation' 17...♗e7, on which, it is true, White loses after 18 ♗g5 ♕c7 19 ♖e1 ♘xd3! 20 ♗xe7 ♕d7! White, however, can obtain a very attractive position by the intermediate move 18 ♗g6+!, and if now 18...hxg6 then 19 ♗g5 ♕c7 20 ♖e1 with the threat of 21 ♕xg6+! Black must therefore reply 18...♔d8 19 ♗f5 ♕xd4 (not 19...♕c7 20 ♗f4 ♕c8 21 ♕e4) 20 ♗f4. This position greatly appealed to me and a continuation of the variation (not exactly forced, it is true) revealed a most attractive idea: 20...♖e8 21 ♖e1 g6? 22 ♗e3 ♕d6 23 ♗xa7!! ♕xe6 24 ♗b6+ ♔c8 (or 24...♔d7 25 ♗xe6+ ♔d6 26 c5 mate) 25 ♗xe6+ and 26 ♗d7. However, in

this variation also Black could have put up a successful defence. My opponent replied almost instantly ...

**17 ... ♔f8** *(D)*




... and here, although neither of the players wanted a draw, it seems that this should have been the normal outcome of the game.

**18 ♗f4 ♖d8**

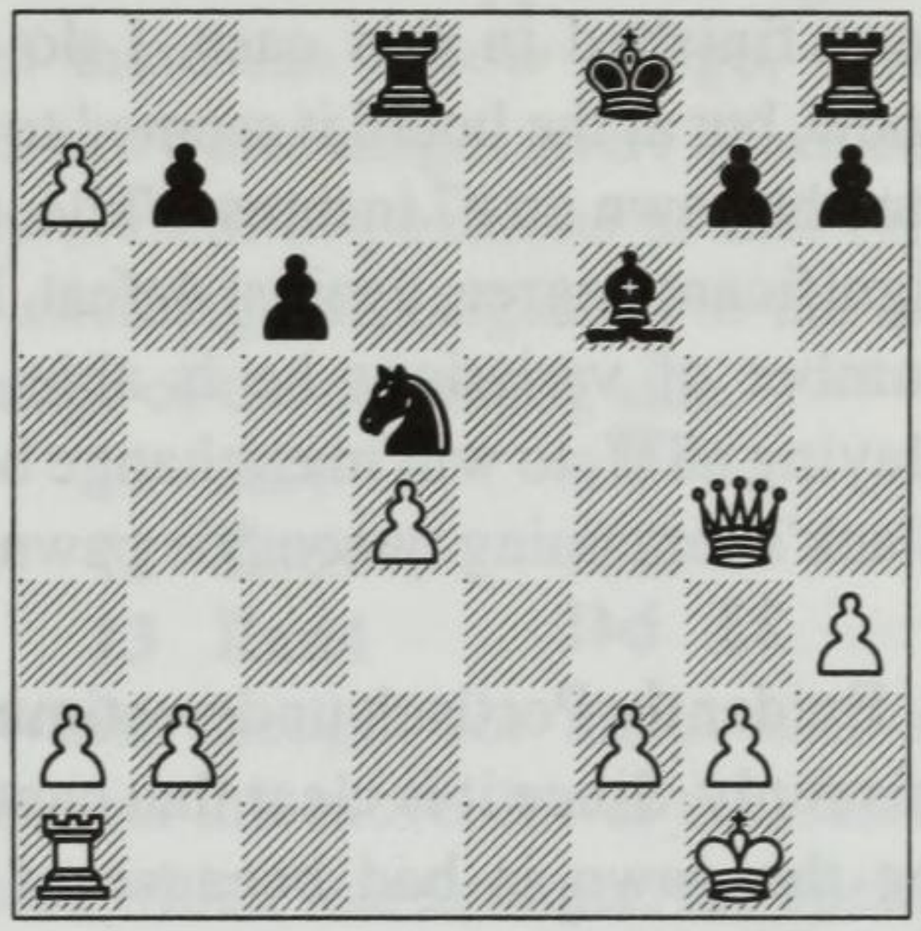
The only good move. Insufficient was 18...♖e8 19 ♗d6+ ♗e7 20 ♖e1 ♕d8 21 ♖e3! or 18...♕d8 19 ♖e1 g5! 20 ♗d6+ ♔g7 21 ♗xb4 when White regains his material while keeping a very strong attack. By giving up his queen Black can look confidently to the future.

**19 c5 ♘xd3!**

**20 cxb6**

Still out for blood. My first intention here had been to force a draw at last by 20 ♗h6 to which Black has one good reply 20...♕xb2! (less good is 20...♕c7 21 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 22 ♗xg7!). However, not every c-pawn can reach the square a7, so White decided on the risky, though not losing, capture of the queen.

**20 ... ♘xf4**
**21 ♕g4 ♘d5**
**22 bxa7** *(D)*




A position has arisen with a rather unusual material balance. White has a queen and three pawns against a rook and two minor pieces. If Black succeeds in co-ordinating his forces, then he will clearly have the better chances. There are two factors which hinder this: the audacious pawn on a7, which at the very least frightens Black, and, although only temporary, the difficulty of developing his king's rook. With his next move Portisch tries to solve these two problems simultaneously, but the further course of the game shows that his plan is incorrect.

**22 ... ♔e7**

The idea is clear, Black's king heads for the a-pawn, and any checks will only act as a following wind, for example, 23 ♖e1+ ♔d6 24 ♕g3+ ♔d7 25 ♕g4+ ♔c7. It is clear that White

must somehow open up lines on the queenside, so that, in his new place also, the black king will feel uncomfortable. This White succeeds in doing. Therefore, stronger was the straightforward 22...g6. How the game would have finished in this case, I do not know, but at the board it seemed to me that the pawn on a7 insures White, to a significant degree, against defeat. In a number of variations he is able, by playing a8♕, to win in exchange both Black's remaining queenside pawns.

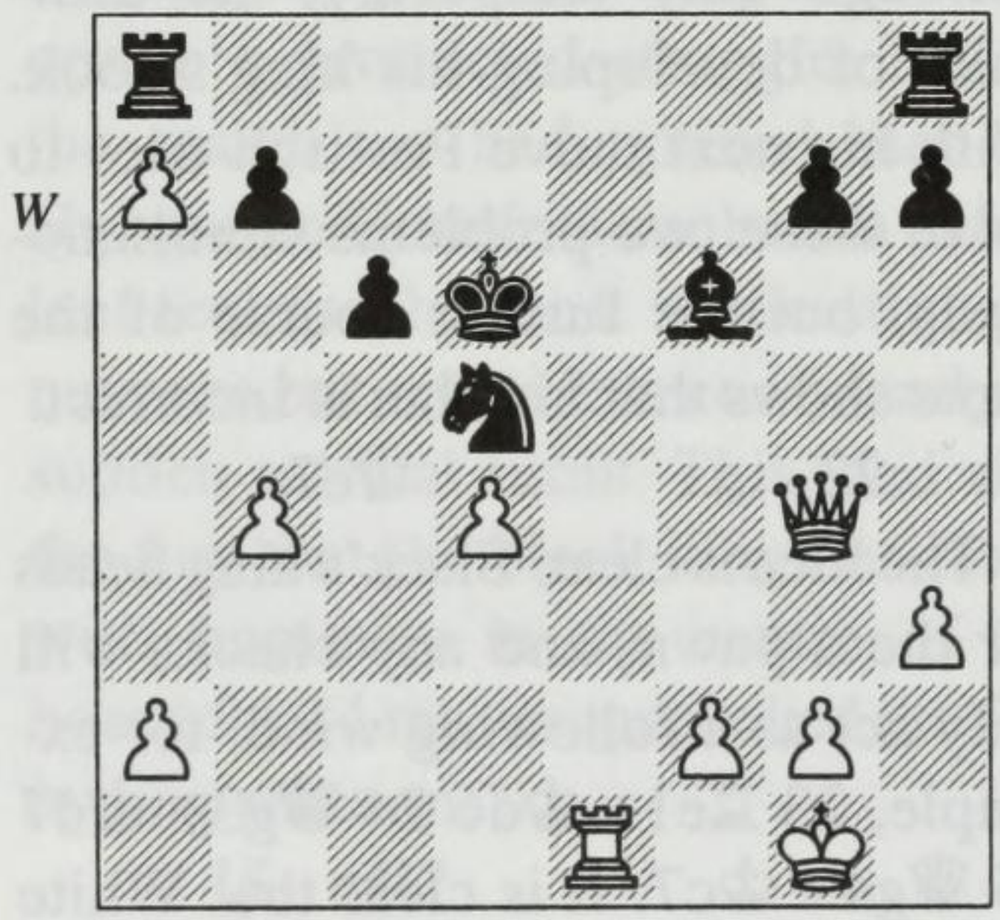
**23 b4!**

Evidently Portisch underestimated this reply. Since it is clear that capturing the pawn is bad because of 24 ♖b1, Black is forced to allow it on further, and its advance spreads confusion in the enemy ranks.

**23 ... ♖a8**

Even so, stronger perhaps was 23...♔d6 24 b5 ♔c7, not giving up, for the moment, the idea of going after the pawn. In any event there will be no time to capture it.

**24 ♖e1+ ♔d6** *(D)*



**25 b5! ♖xa7?**

This loses instantly, but Black's defensive task was already very difficult. White has at his disposal two threats: the attacking 26 bxc6 bxc6 27 ♕e6+ ♔c7 28 ♖c1 and the constricting 26 b6!, after which either the a-pawn remains a constant threat, or else Black must, all the same, go in for the extremely dangerous opening of the b-file (after 26...♘xb6 27 ♖b1). The move in the game hastens the end.

**26 ♖e6+ ♔c7**
**27 ♖xf6! 1-0**

Game 64

**Tal – Portisch**

*Candidates Match (4), Bled 1965*

French Defence

**1 e4 e6**
**2 d4 d5**
**3 ♘c3 ♘f6**
**4 ♗g5 dxe4**
**5 ♘xe4 ♘bd7**

Up till 1962, this variation was not especially popular, and was adopted only rarely in those cases when Black very much wanted a draw. In the Candidates Tournament at Curaçao, Petrosian played this variation against me in round eight, as did Benko two rounds later. In the game with Petrosian I played 6 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 7 ♘f3 c5 and after an hour's thought chose the absolutely unique plan of 8 ♕d3 ♗e7 9 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10 ♕b5+. White naturally lost very quickly. The game with Benko developed more normally, but

during the game with Portisch I could not recall the exact order of moves (up till now I have fairly successfully endeavoured to forget all the games which I played at Curaçao).

**6 ♘xf6+**

Probably the most accurate. After 6 ♘f3 ♗e7 Black succeeds in simplifying the position, since on 7 ♘xf6+, 7...♗xf6 is possible.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **6** | **...** | **♘xf6** |
| **7** | **♘f3** | **c5** |
| **8** | **♗c4** | |

I think that it is in this way, without trying to refute Black's opening, that White reaches the most promising position. Attempts to force matters by 8 ♘e5 or 8 ♗b5+ do not achieve anything real against accurate defence.

| | | |
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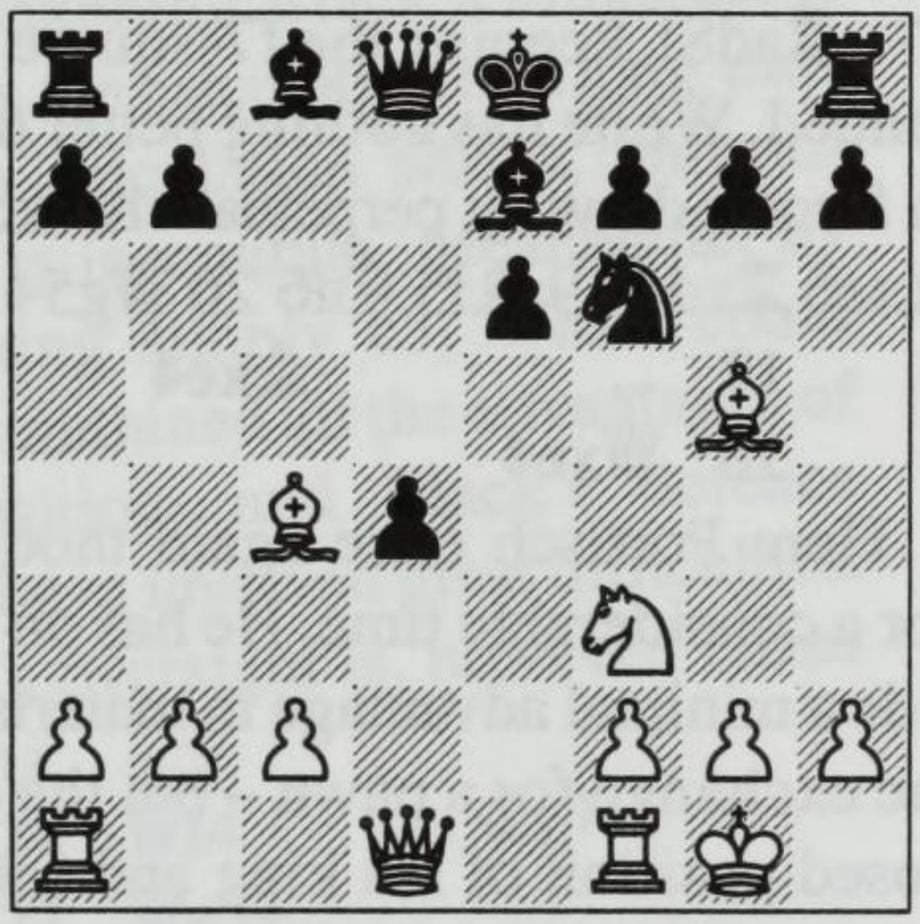
| **8** | **...** | **cxd4** |
| **9** | **0-0** | **♗e7** *(D)* |

*W*



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| **10** | **♕e2** | **h6** |

Black's desire to rid himself of the bishop on g5 is understandable, but in the future the pawn on h6 will draw the attention of the white pieces directed against Black's kingside. h6 is a very convenient square on which to sacrifice. 10...0-0 11 ♖ad1 ♘d5 12 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 was more in the spirit of the variation, when Black's knight can follow his white opponent: against ♘e5 there can follow ...♘g6, while with the white knight on d4 Black can play ...♘c6. In positions of this type the exchange of knights is to the advantage of the defending side.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **11** | **♗f4** | **0-0** |
| **12** | **♖ad1** | **♗d7** |
| **13** | **♖xd4** | |

White thought for about half an hour over this move. It was difficult to decide which was stronger: the openly aggressive move in the game, or the more reserved 13 ♘xd4 after which White could play his rook along the third rank without loss of time. In nearly all variations White's attack would develop absolutely unhindered. What didn't much appeal to me was the fact that Black could reply 13...♘d5 14 ♗e5 ♗f6 15 ♗xd5 exd5 16 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 and although White has an undisputed positional advantage, it may prove insufficient to win. White can easily obtain three quarters of a point, but after a defeat one wants more.

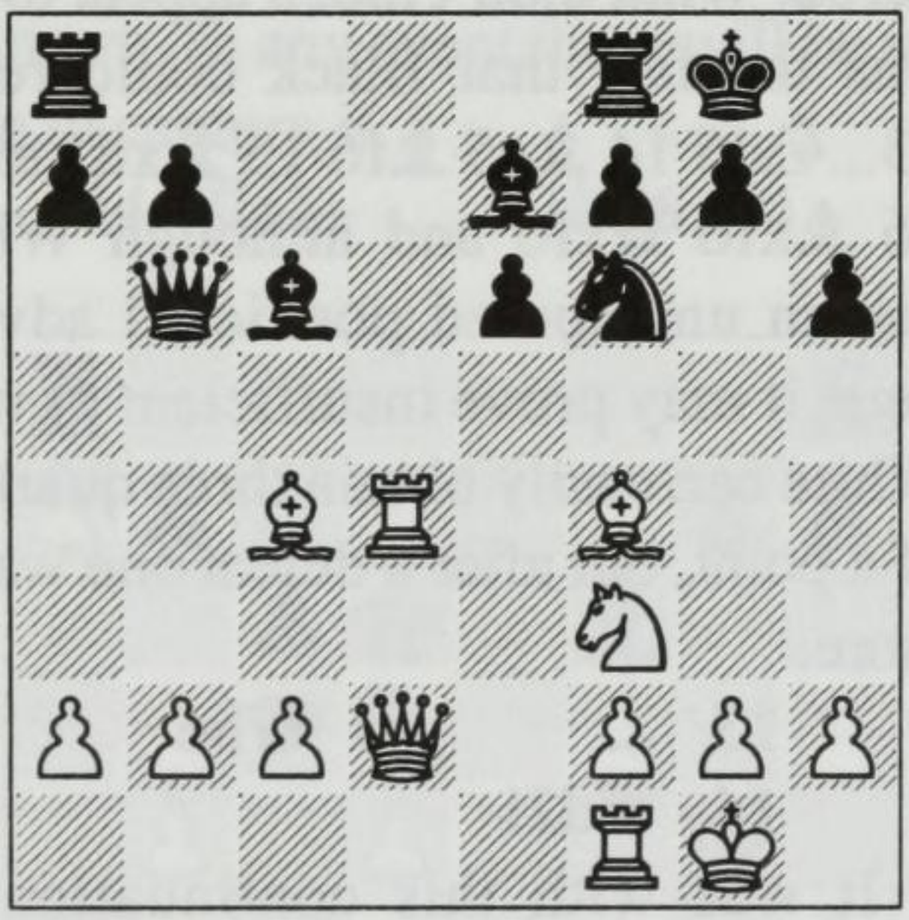
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **13** | **...** | **♕b6** |
| **14** | **♕d2!** | |

It was with this continuation in mind that White decided on his previous move – to capture the pawn with his rook. I did not consider any other moves. Therefore, I was most

astonished when after the game Portisch told me that only here had we diverged from the path of the Tal-Benko game, where White had chosen the ridiculous, in my (present) opinion, continuation 14 ♖d3. It is not surprising that here, having come up against an innovation, Portisch thought for about forty minutes.

**14 ... ♗c6** *(D)*

Black could also defend his bishop, and meet the coming bishop sacrifice, by 14...♖fc8. Against this I was intending to examine once again the sharp variation 15 ♗xh6 gxh6 16 ♕xh6 ♕xd4! 17 ♘xd4 ♖xc4 18 ♖d1, with dangerous threats, and if this proved insufficient I had in reserve the unpretentious retreat 15 ♗b3, keeping an attractive position. After the text, White's reply is practically forced, otherwise the move 14 ♕d2 is simply a waste of time.



*W*

**15 ♗xh6 ♘e4**

The only move. In case of 15...gxh6 White continues his attack by means of 16 ♕xh6 and now on 16...♗xf3, decisive is 17 ♕g5+ ♔h8 18 ♖h4+ ♘h7 (or 18...♗h5 19 ♗d3 with the irresistible threat of 20 ♖xh5+) 19 ♕xe7 when 19...♖g8 fails to 20 ♕f6+. 16...♘e4 is answered very strongly by 17 ♗d3. If Black changes the move order by playing 15...♗xf3, then if he wishes White can transpose into the variation already considered by 16 ♗xg7. Besides this, the simple 16 gxf3 gxh6 17 ♔h1 is also not bad.

**16 ♕f4 gxh6**

**17 ♖xe4**

This gives the game rather a different direction. In return for the sacrificed exchange White counts on keeping a persistent initiative. The attempt to force matters by 17 ♕xh6 achieves its goal after 17...♗c5 18 ♘g5!, 17...♖fd8 18 ♗xe6! or 17...♕c5 18 ♗d3, but after the only move 17...♖ad8!, keeping the f7-square defended, White has nothing better than to force a draw by perpetual check: 18 ♗xe6 ♖xd4 19 ♗f5 ♘f6 20 ♕g5+.

**17 ... ♗xe4**

**18 ♕xe4**

Here Portisch once again thought for a considerable time. He has on his side a minimal advantage in material – the exchange for a pawn – but the exposed position of his king and (once again) the presence of opposite-coloured bishops calls on him to be extra-careful. Thus 18...♕xb2 loses almost immediately to 19 ♘e5!, when it is impossible to defend against the various sacrifices on e6 and f7 (19...♗f6

20 ♗d3). I thought that the best defensive resource was 18...♗f6 19 ♗d3 ♖fd8 20 ♕h7+ ♔f8 21 ♕xh6+ ♔e7 (weaker is 21...♗g7 22 ♕f4 or ♕h5) 22 b3, but here White already has two pawns for the exchange, while his initiative shows no signs of diminishing. Portisch attempts to include his rook in the defence.

**18 ... ♖ad8!**

**19 b3**

The prospect of re-establishing material equality by 19 ♗d3 ♖xd3 and 20...♕xb2 did not appear good enough.

**19 ... ♗c5**

Now the idea behind Black's defence is revealed. First of all, he restricts White's rook for the moment by attacking the point f2. He plans for the black bishop to take part in the defence via the square d4. The following manoeuvre by White is aimed at further weakening Black's kingside. It involves the calculation of a long variation, a calculation which, unfortunately, is inaccurate. Meanwhile, by continuing simply c3, White could have maintained all the advantages of his position, and Black's defence would have involved great difficulties. White's oversight is, however, rather amusing.

**20 ♕f4 ♔g7**

**21 ♕e5+**

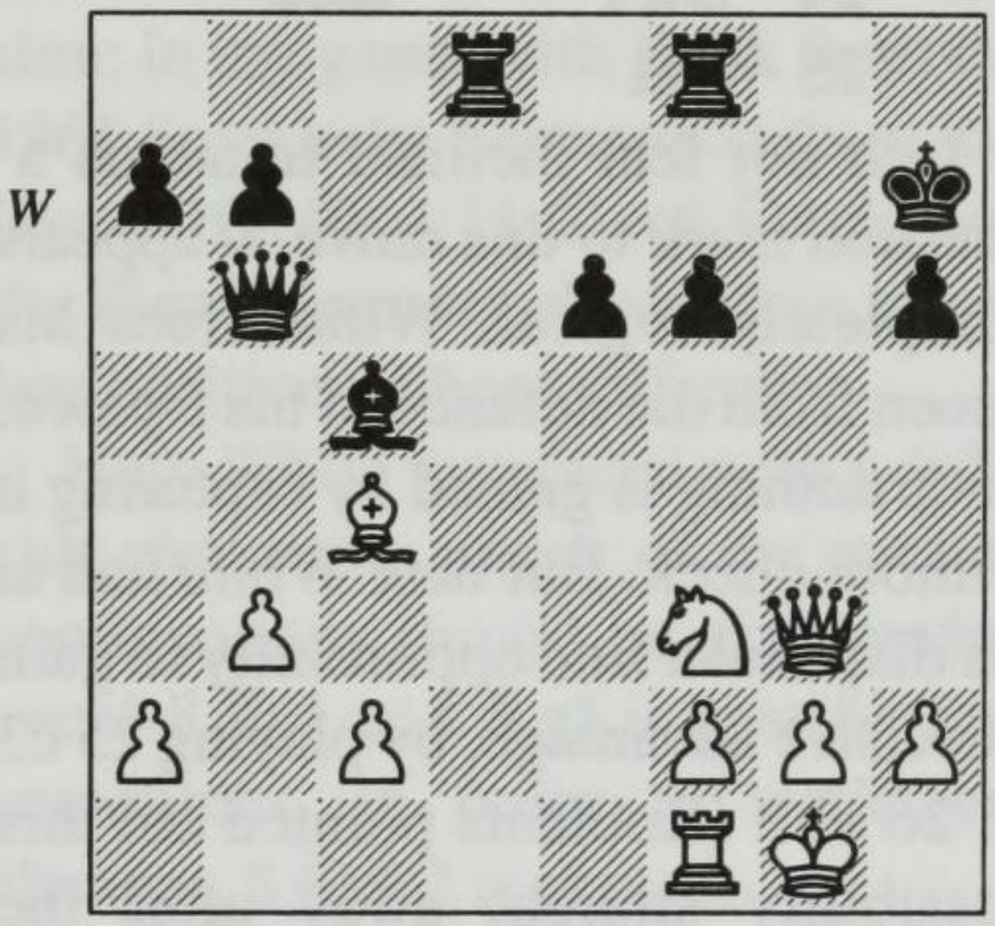
This forces the advance of the pawn, since it is hopeless to allow the queen in on f6.

**21 ... f6**

**22 ♕g3+**

White naturally did not even consider capturing on e6.

**22 ... ♔h7** *(D)*




**23 ♖e1 ♖g8**

23...♖d6 would lose to 24 ♘h4 ♖g8 25 ♗d3+ f5 26 ♗xf5+![1] This was White's idea – to free the square e7 for his rook.

However, Black had at his disposal a very interesting defensive possibility: 23...♗b4. I had taken this into account, and had prepared a winning variation, or so I thought: 24 ♗xe6 ♗xe1 25 ♗f5+ ♔h8 26 ♕g6 ♗xf2+ (if 26...♕xf2+, then 27 ♔h1 ♕f1+ 28 ♘g1) 27 ♔f1 ♖d1+ 28 ♔e2 ♕e3+ 29 ♔xd1.

While Portisch was thinking over his move, White to his horror ascertained that, by playing 28...♖e1+, Black would be the first to mate. White would probably have had to

---

1 I do not see White's continuation if Black simply takes the bishop.

move his rook, or else force a draw by 24 c3 ♗xc3[1] 25 ♘h4 ♗xe1 26 ♕g6+.

After the mistake committed by Black, White's attack gains in strength with every move.

**24 ♕h4 ♖d6**

**25 ♔f1**

I do not feel inclined to attach a question mark to this move. It appears completely logical. White frees his queen from the defence of his f-pawn, since nothing is gained by capturing it without check. But here White had at his disposal a fine opportunity to gain a decisive advantage, by playing 25 c3 a5 26 a3!! (Koblents pointed out this possibility straight away after the game). Now, in view of the threat of 27 b4, Black is forced to move either his queen or his rook, but then White captures one of the pawns (on e6 or f6) with decisive effect. For example: 26...♖c6 27 ♕xf6 ♗xf2+ 28 ♔f1 ♖xc4 29 ♖xe6 or 26...f5 27 b4 axb4 28 axb4 ♖g4 29 ♕e7+ ♖g7 30 bxc5 ♕xc5 31 ♕f8! ♖g8 32 ♕f7+ ♖g7 33 ♘g5+! hxg5 34 ♕h5+ ♔g8 35 ♖xe6. Fortunately, White's omission does not alter the overall assessment of the position. It is extremely difficult for Black to defend against the numerous threats, especially when in severe time-trouble.

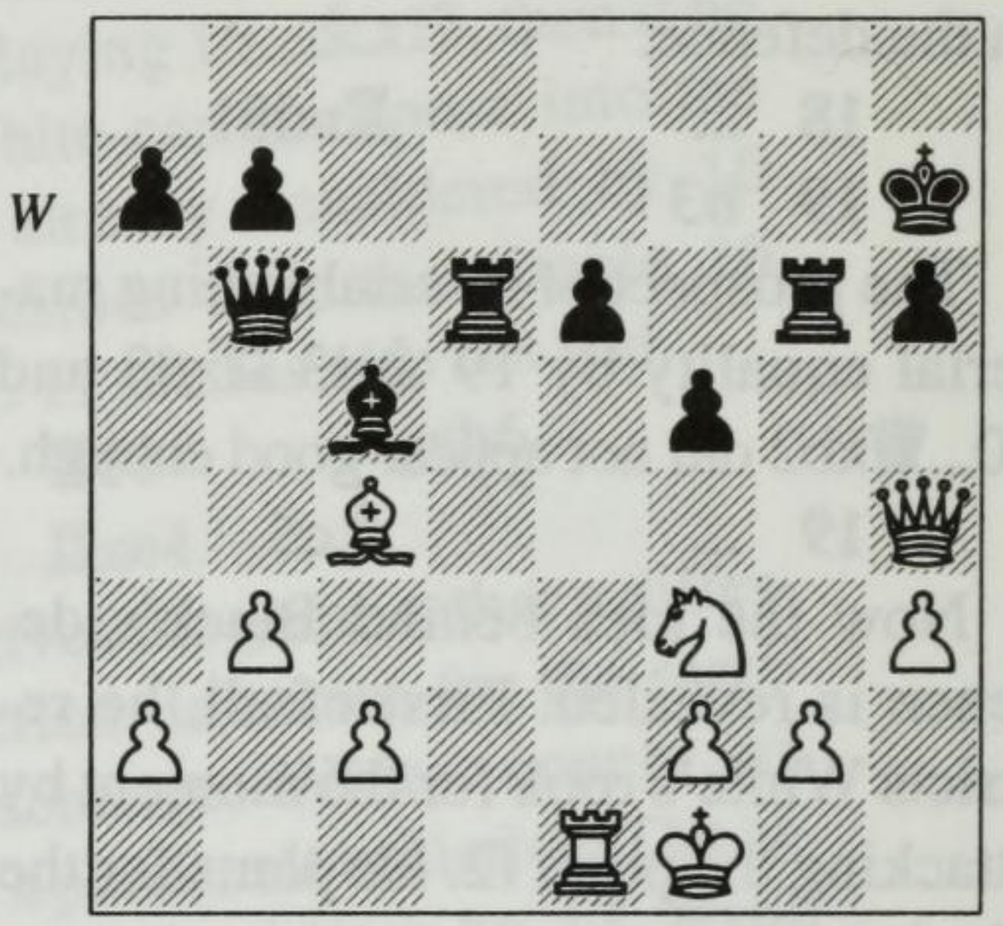
**25 ... f5**

**26 h3**

Preparing for the g-pawn to come into play in the role of a battering-ram.

**26 ... ♖g6** *(D)*

Perhaps 26...♕c6, which prevents White's next move, would have enabled Black to hold out longer. Even then, by continuing 27 ♕f6, White would keep all the advantages of his position.




**27 g4!**

This destroys, once and for all, the black king's shelter. Black gains nothing by 27...fxg4 28 hxg4 ♕c6 because of the simple 29 ♘e5, when he does not have a single check. Here the best defence was perhaps the immediate 27...♕c6 28 gxf5 ♕xf3 29 fxg6+ ♔xg6, but White is then material up with an active position. The move made by Portisch loses immediately.

**27 ... ♖d7**

**28 ♖xe6!**

It was still possible to fall into a trap: 28 ♗xe6? ♗xf2! and Black succeeds in simplifying the position. Now it is all over.

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1 Black should play 24...♖g8, and only then ...♗xc3.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **28** | **...** | **♖d1+** |
| **29** | **♔g2** | **♖xe6** |
| **30** | **♗xe6** | **fxg4** |
| **31** | **♕xg4** | **♖d8** |
| **32** | **♘e5** | **1-0** |

Game 65

**Tal – Larsen**

*Candidates Match (2), Bled 1965*

Ruy Lopez

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **e5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **♘c6** |
| **3** | **♗b5** | **♘f6** |
| **4** | **0-0** | **d6** |

With his third move the Danish Grandmaster set White a problem: he had to decide which system to play. With his fourth move, however, Black himself answers this question. In this game he is attracted by a system which was very popular among the great players of the past: Steinitz, Lasker and Capablanca. Nowadays it does not enjoy such fame. Black obtains a cramped but solid position, which today, when the striving is for more active defensive possibilities, is thought unfashionable.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5** | **d4** | **♗d7** |
| **6** | **♘c3** | **exd4** |
| **7** | **♘xd4** | **♗e7** |

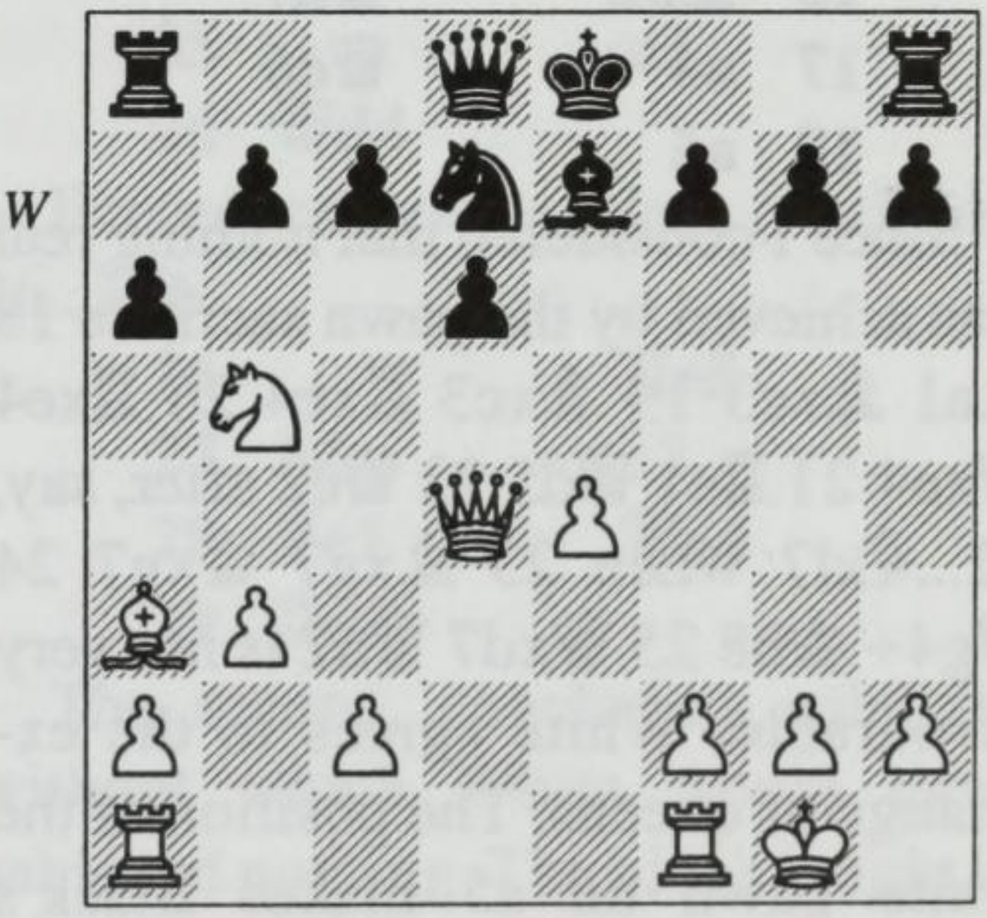
The question of how White should best play in this position is a mystery, I think, not only to me. In any case, it was with great surprise that I read an article in *Shakhmatny Bulletin* by Shamkovich, in which it was stated that the strong continuation 8 ♗xc6 bxc6 9 ♕f3 0-0 10 e5 had been suggested by Tal. In the first place, I have no wish to attribute this invention to myself, since this was played, as far as I know, 50 years ago. I have adopted this continuation on only one occasion: in my game with Böök from the 1961 Stockholm tournament there followed 10...♘g4 11 ♘xc6 ♘xe5! and the Finnish master obtained an excellent position without difficulty.

Here White was faced with a difficult choice: to which of the ancient continuations should he give preference? 8 ♖e1 or 8 ♗g5 is possible and sometimes, in order to avoid exchanges, 8 ♘de2 is played.

In the game there followed ...

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **8** | **b3** | **♘xd4** |
| **9** | **♕xd4** | **♗xb5** |
| **10** | **♘xb5** | **♘d7** |
| **11** | **♗a3** | **a6** *(D)* |

It is well known that 11...♗f6 leads to a difficult position for Black after 12 ♕c4.



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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **12** | **♘c3** | **♗f6** |

**13 ♕d2**

A routine continuation. More accurate was 13 ♕e3, as recommended by books on opening theory, or 13 ♕d3, apparently not yet recommended by anyone. The position of his queen on d2 deprives White of several attractive attacking possibilities.

**13 ... 0-0**
**14 ♖ad1 ♖e8**

In similar positions it is considered safest for Black to play 14...♗xc3, but then White has a definite, though not decisive, advantage.

**15 ♖fe1 ♘b6**

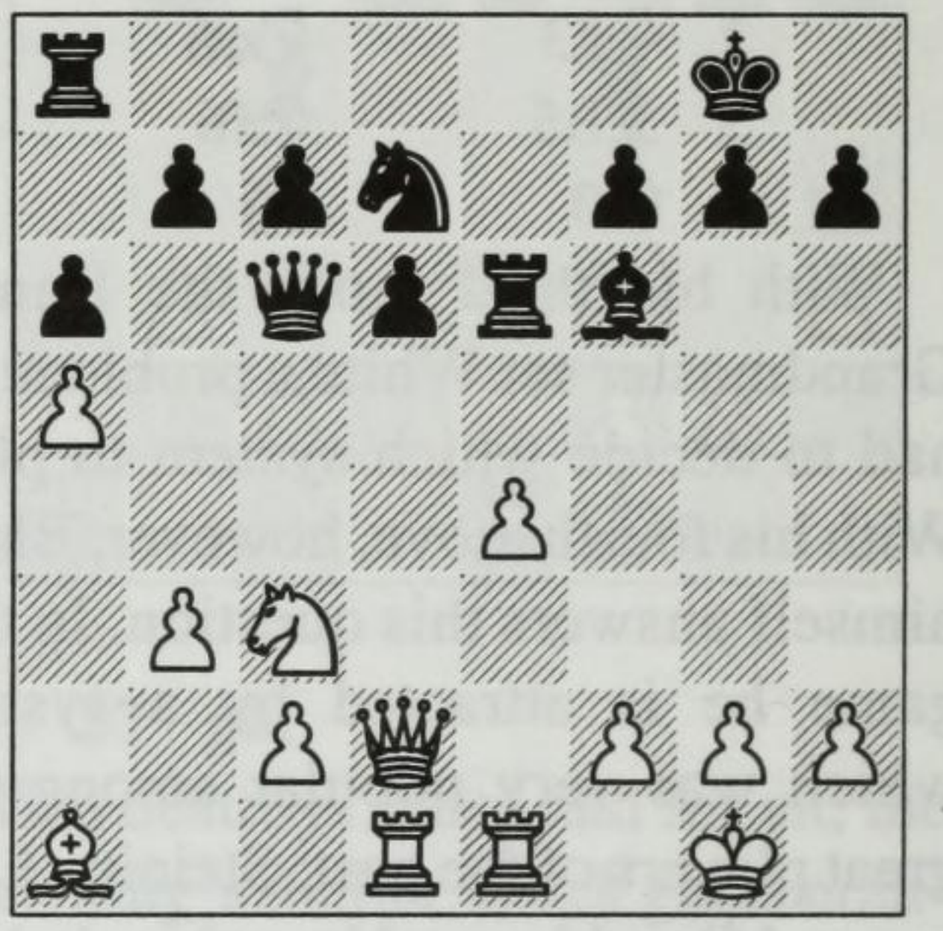
Black is able to develop his forces fairly harmoniously thanks to the position of the white queen on d2. Thus if the queen had stood on d3 or e3, 15 ♘d5 would have been possible, but here it would have led to the loss of the e-pawn. Moreover, 16 ♖e3 now fails to 16...♗g5. White is temporarily forced to retreat, in order first of all to drive back the black knight.

**16 ♗b2 ♕d7**
**17 a4 ♕c6**
**18 a5**

Since I considered that nothing real was achieved by the pawn sacrifice 18 ♗a1 ♗xc3 19 ♗xc3 ♖xe4 20 ♖xe4 ♕xe4 21 ♖e1 ♕d5 22 ♕e2 after, say, 22...♘d7 when 23 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 24 ♕g4+ ♔h8 25 ♕xd7 ♕d2 is not very favourable, White agrees to the exchange of queens. The position of the white pawn on a5 makes Black's queenside somewhat vulnerable, since the advance of his b-pawn will create weaknesses. It cannot be asserted, of course, that White has a winning position, but, at any rate, Black faces the prospect of a rather difficult defence.

**18 ... ♘d7**
**19 ♗a1 ♖e6** *(D)*

On 19...♗xc3 White would have replied 20 ♕xc3. I think that the move in the game is stronger, and should gradually have led to Black achieving a roughly equal position.



**20 ♘d5 ♗xa1**
**21 ♖xa1 ♖ae8**

After this inaccuracy White's advantage becomes clear. Black should have exchanged off the last pair of minor pieces by 21...♘f6. It is easy to see that White cannot avoid the exchange of knights. I was intending to reply 22 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 23 ♖a4! with a somewhat more active position (once again thanks to the pawn on a5!), but I think that a player such as Kholmov would be able to draw without particular difficulty. Larsen tries to play actively, and provokes an immediate

crisis, which turns out, however, to be not in his favour.

**22 f3 f5**

On 22...♘f6 White can favourably retreat his knight to c3, or else play 23 c4 since his e-pawn is defended. After the text-move, if White does not have a tactical solution then he is forced to agree to a draw after 23 ♘f4 ♖6e7 24 exf5 ♖xe1+ 25 ♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 26 ♕xe1 ♕c5+ 27 ♔h1 ♕xf5 28 ♕e6+ ♕f7, or 24 ♕d5+ ♕xd5 25 ♘xd5 ♖e5 26 ♘xc7 ♖c8 27 ♘d5 fxe4 28 c4 ♘c5.

However, the bad position of the black queen allows White to carry out a forced manoeuvre.

**23 ♖e3!**

Much less convincing is 23 ♖a4 to which Black, if he does not want to go in for the complications of 23...♘c5 24 ♖c4 fxe4 25 b4 ♕b5, with extremely unclear play, can simply reply 23...b5. The consequences of the forced play which now begins were assessed differently by the two players.

**23 ... fxe4**

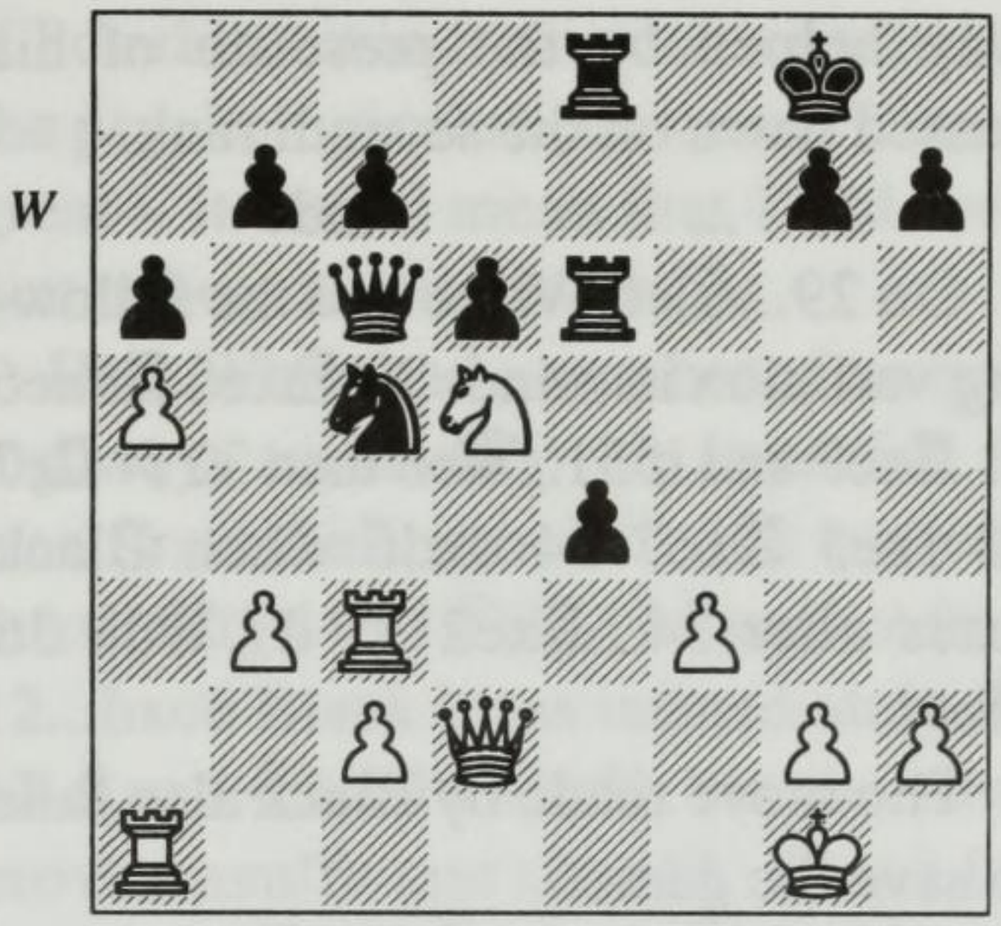
There is nothing better. The threat was 24 ♖c3.

**24 ♖c3 ♘c5** *(D)*

**25 ♘f4**

The first subtlety; White gains a tempo. The immediate 25 b4 is refuted by 25...exf3! If then 26 bxc5, both 26...♖e2 and 26...f2+ are possible, while on 26 gxf3 there follows 26...♖e2 27 ♕d4 ♕d7 28 bxc5 ♕h3 with irresistible threats.

If Black's rook now moves, then the e2-square is defended. Larsen finds a




clever defence, and avoids losing his knight, but at the cost of too great a positional concession. After the game my opponent told me that in playing 22...f5 he overlooked, in the variation 25...♖e5 26 b4 e3 27 ♕d4 g5 28 ♘h5 ♘e6, the reply 29 ♕xe5, after which White comes out the exchange ahead. To be fair, it should be said that White also has other possibilities, in particular 27 ♕e2. In addition, 25...♖e5 26 b4 exf3 27 bxc5 ♖xc5 does not give Black sufficient compensation for the piece after 28 ♖xf3.

**25 ... e3**

**26 ♕d4**

Forced, otherwise Black continues 26...♖f6.

**26 ... ♖e5**

**27 b4 e2**

**28 ♖e1 ♕a4**

**29 ♖c4!**

The second, concluding subtlety, without which White would have achieved nothing. The black knight is forced to move, and White breaks through with his rook. Black is in no

way helped by the presence of his passed pawn on the seventh rank.

**29 ... ♘d7**

On 29...♘e6 White had the following variation in mind: 30 ♘xe6 ♖8xe6 31 ♖xc7 and if 31...♕e8 then 32 f4 ♖e7 33 fxe5 ♖xc7 34 exd6 when Black loses after 34...♖xc2 35 d7 ♕d8 36 ♕e4!

The move made by Black also fails to save the game.

**30 ♖xc7 ♘f6**
**31 ♕xd6 ♕a2**
**32 h4 ♘d5**

In time-trouble Black gives up the exchange. However, his position was already beyond saving. After the relatively better 32...h6 I was intending to continue simply 33 ♔h2 when Black appears to have no useful move. The remainder is very simple.

**33 ♖c5 ♘xf4**
**34 ♖xe5 ♖f8**
**35 g3 ♕f7**
**36 gxf4 ♕xf4**
**37 ♖1xe2 1-0**

On 37...♕xf3 I was planning the 'brilliant' combination 38 ♕xf8+.

Game 66

**Tal – Larsen**

Candidates Match (6), Bled 1965

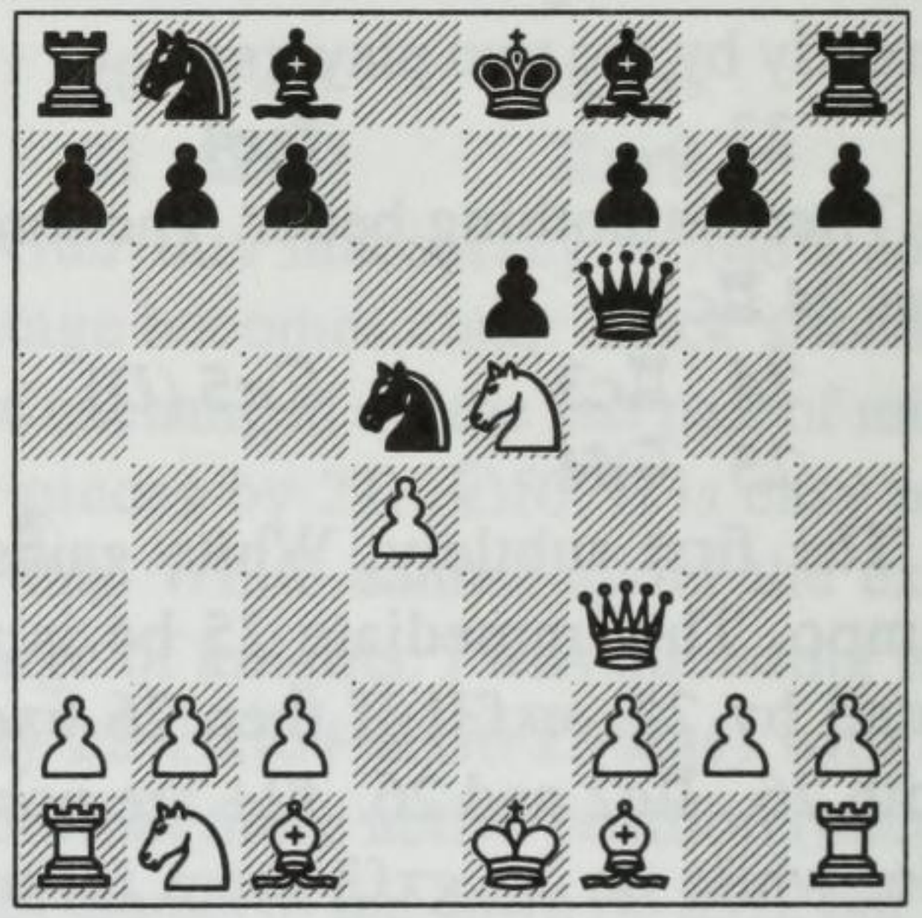
Alekhine Defence

**1 e4 ♘f6**
**2 e5 ♘d5**
**3 d4 d6**
**4 ♘f3 dxe5**
**5 ♘xe5 e6**

Once again this dubious (there is no other word for it) variation. Immediately after the final game of the Larsen-Ivkov match, the Yugoslav grandmaster showed me that encounter, and 'scolded' himself for the pseudo-active move 6 ♕h5 which he had made. Then he offered the following opinion: 6 ♘d2 is the quietest reply, 6 ♕f3, although committal, is the strongest; after a swift analysis, I agreed. Of course, in view of the state of the match, the committal nature of White's move was not at all an objection.

**6 ♕f3 ♕f6** *(D)*

Probably stronger is 6...♘f6 agreeing to a somewhat passive position. In reply White would have played 7 ♗e3 preparing queenside castling. After Larsen's move, the black queen is badly placed, and Black has to waste precious time defending her.




**7 ♕g3 h6**

8 ♗g5 was threatened.

**8 ♘c3**

In order to exploit the better placing of his pieces White must play energetically. As exchanging on c3 would only strengthen White's centre, while White's knight is threatening to move to e4 with great effect, Black continues to manoeuvre with his knight, hoping to deflect White from his intentions.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **8** | **...** | **♘b4** |
| **9** | **♗b5+** | **c6** |
| **10** | **♗a4** | **♘d7** *(D)* |

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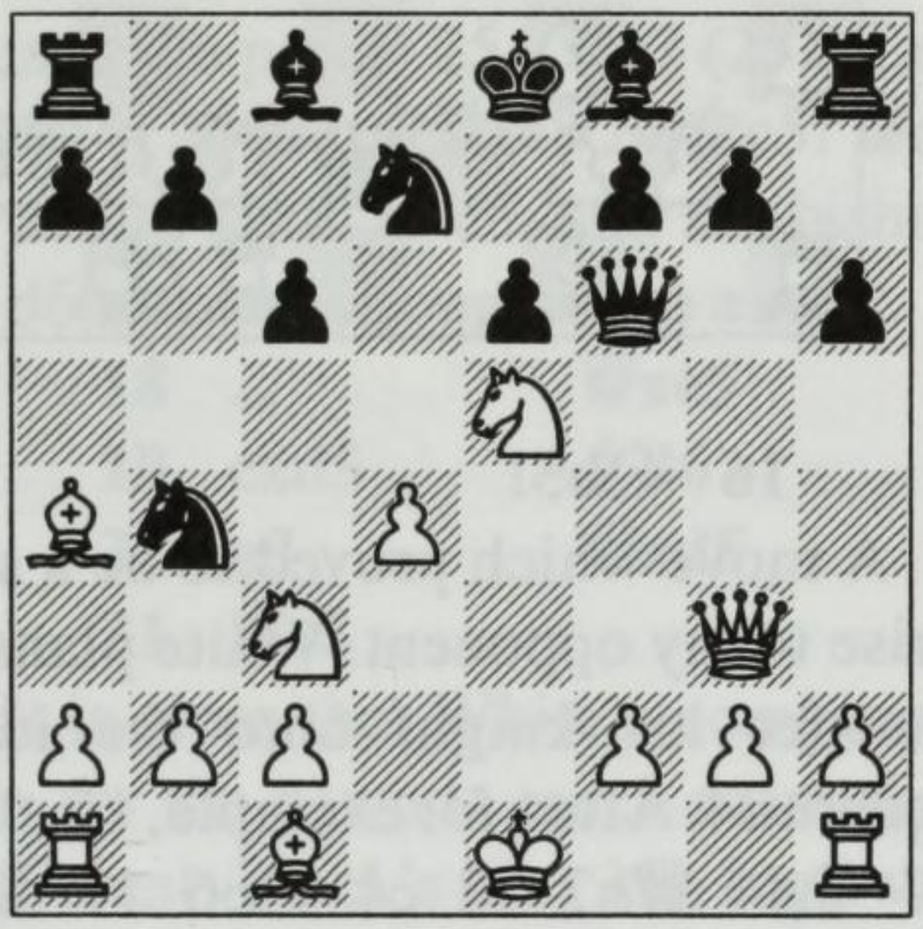


The transfer of the bishop to its inactive post on a4 does not signify that White has given up ideas of an attack. After ♘e4 and c3 the bishop can be favourably switched to the b1-h7 diagonal. Here White thought for quite a long time. The advantages of his position are perfectly clear – a lead in development, and Black's difficulty in evacuating his king – but all this must be effectively exploited. In the given position victory was doubly necessary; if I couldn't win from such a position the psychological shock would be too great – it would mean that I had forgotten how to win altogether.

Here White had a number of tempting ways to develop his initiative. I was first of all struck by the tactical possibility 11 a3 ♘d5 12 ♘xc6. After 12...bxc6 Black loses immediately to 13 ♗xc6 ♘b6 14 ♘b5!, but the idea proves insufficient after 12...♘xc3 13 bxc3 (13 ♕xc3 ♘b6 14 ♘b8+ ♔d8) 13...♘b6 14 ♗b5 ♗d7 15 ♘xa7 ♕d8[1].

The positional 11 ♗f4 gave nothing decisive after the reply 11...♘d5. White could have gained good attacking chances by the manoeuvre 11 ♘e4 ♕f5 12 f3 and objectively this was perhaps the strongest continuation, although after 12...♘xe5 13 dxe5 ♗d7 14 a3 ♘d5 15 c4 ♘b6 16 ♗c2 ♕h5 it is not so easy to develop the attack. I was intending to continue the analysis of this variation, when my attention was suddenly drawn to the possibility of the piece sacrifice which soon occurred in the game. The idea appeared very tempting.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **11** | **0-0** | **♘xe5** |

This knight could not be endured much longer.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | **dxe5** | **♕g6** |
| **13** | **♕f3** | |

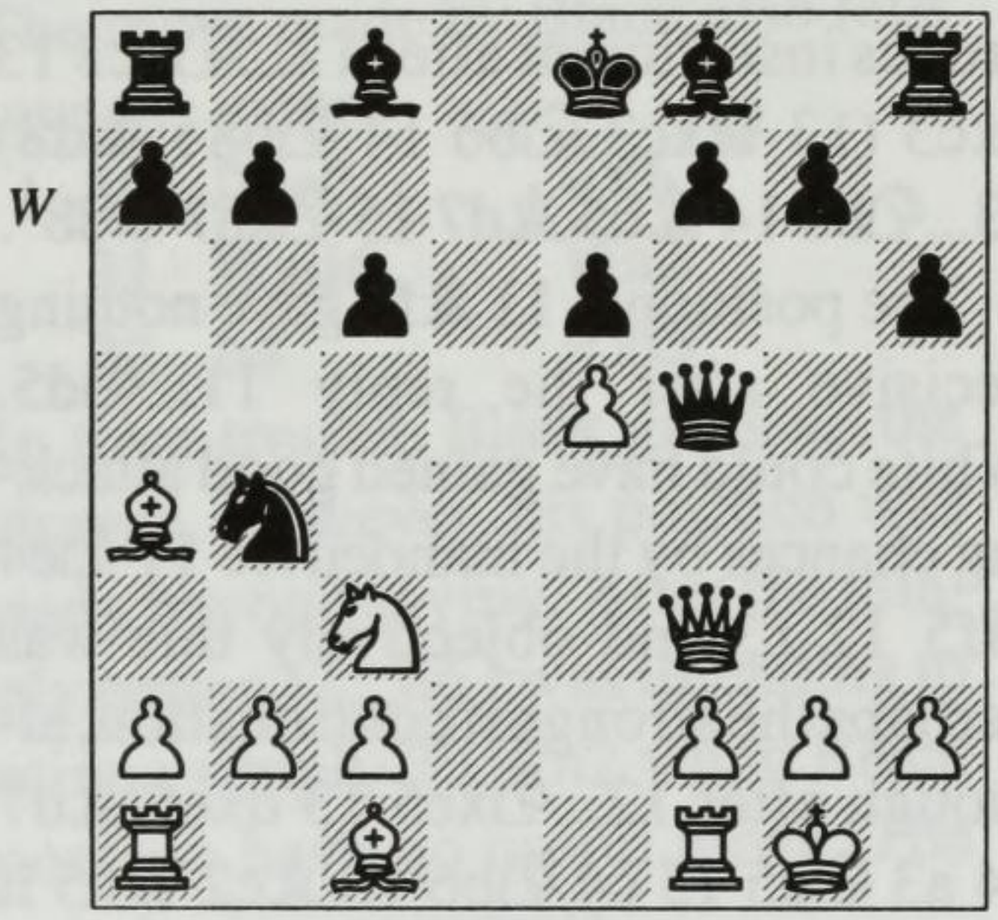
White could have obtained the better ending by exchanging queens, but this would have been a small achievement.

---

1 After 16 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 17 ♖b1, followed by ♘b5, White stays two pawns up.

**13 ... ♕f5** *(D)*

Not altogether successful as Black drives the queen onto a more favourable square. Stronger was 13...♗d7, defending c6, to which I was intending to reply 14 ♕e2 with the idea of ♘e4 and c3, bringing the light-squared bishop into play. Out of the question, of course, was 13...♘xc2 14 ♗xc6+.



**14 ♕e2 ♗e7**

It would appear that Black has not seen the intended sacrifice. White's idea was associated with the continuation 14...♘d5 15 ♘b5! and it is still possible in the game. True, on 14...♗d7 the manoeuvre ♘e4, c3 and ♗c2 would gain in strength.

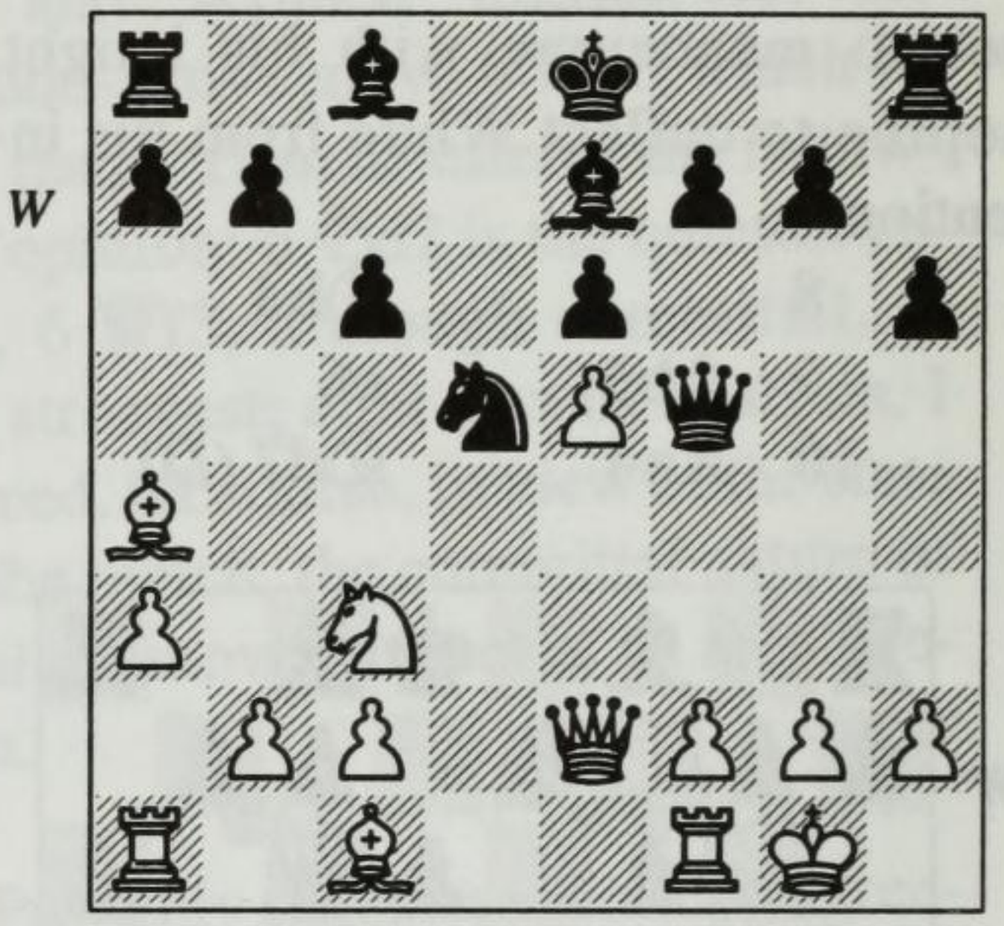
After the text-move, however, 15 f4 is met by 15...0-0 16 ♘e4 b5! 17 ♗b3 c5! and on 18 c3 c4!, not allowing the bishop onto the b1-h7 diagonal.

**15 a3**

If White did not have the following move at his disposal, this would be a bad mistake, leading to the loss of the initiative.

**15 ... ♘d5** *(D)*

Also on 15...♘a6, 16 ♘b5 is possible, true, with a slightly different idea: 16...cxb5? 17 ♗xb5+ and 18 ♗d3, winning the queen.



**16 ♘b5!**

A move which proved to be a surprise to my opponent. White plans to transfer his knight onto the ideal square d4. After, for example, 16...0-0 17 ♘d4 ♕h7 18 c4 ♘b6 19 ♗c2 Black's position is extremely difficult, and so the acceptance of the sacrifice is forced.

**16 ... cxb5**

**17 ♕xb5+**

But here 17 ♗xb5+ ♔f8 18 ♗d3 fails to 18...♘f4!

**17 ... ♔d8**

**18 c4**

The critical position. Where is the knight to retreat to? Larsen chooses the path of least resistance: he gives back the piece, but the position of his king in the centre allows White easily to organise a decisive attack without

any significant material sacrifice. White saw that after 18...♘b6 19 ♕a5 he would also win back his piece, since bad is 19...♗d7 20 ♗e3 ♔c7 21 c5. Stronger is the immediate 19...♔c7 20 c5 ♔b8 21 cxb6 axb6 22 ♕b5 ♖a5 23 ♕b3, although here also White has good attacking chances. The main line considered by White when making the sacrifice was 18...♘f4 19 ♖d1+[1] ♔c7 20 ♖d7+ ♗xd7 21 ♕xd7+ ♔b8 22 ♕xe7 ♕xe5 23 ♗e3 ♘g6 (24 ♖d1 was threatened) 24 ♕xf7 ♕f6 25 ♗e8! (this is the point) 25...♕e7 (25...♘e5 26 ♗f4) 26 ♕xg6 ♖xe8 27 ♗c5! ♕d7 28 ♗d6+ ♔c8 29 c5, and the bishop on d6 is much stronger than a rook.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **18** | **...** | **♕xe5** |
| **19** | **cxd5** | **♗d6** |
| **20** | **g3** | **♕xd5** |
| **21** | **♕e2** | |

It is clear that White's compensation for the pawn is much more than sufficient. Black's king is a long way from any sort of peaceful refuge, while it only remains for White to develop his queen's bishop, and all his pieces will be included in a decisive attack.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **21** | **...** | **♔e7** |
| **22** | **♖d1** | **♕a5** |
| **23** | **♕g4** | **♕f5** |

This clever possibility does not help Black in the least. White considered here 23...e5, after which not altogether convincing are 24 ♕h4+ f6 or 24 ♗g5+ hxg5 25 ♕xg5+ ♔f8 26 ♖xd6 ♗e6 27 ♖ad1 f6! However, by continuing 24 ♕xg7 ♗e6 (24...♕xa4 is met by the same move) 25 ♗xh6, White would obtain an irresistible attack.

**24 ♕c4** *(D)*

Not 24 ♕xg7?? ♗e5!. This queen manoeuvre emphasises how desperate is Black's position, as after 24...♖d8 25 ♗e3 he has no good move.

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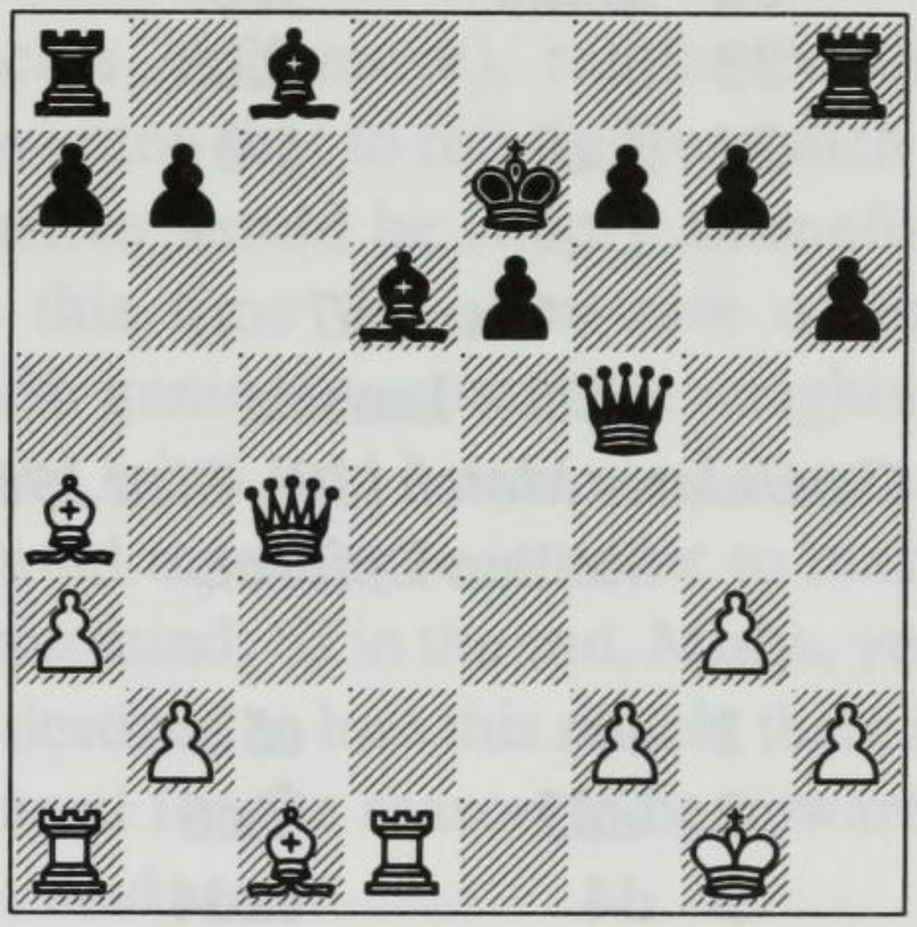

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **24** | **...** | **♕c5** |
| **25** | **♕d3** | **♕d5** |
| **26** | **♕c3** | |

White's queen was heading for this square. Now 26...♕e5 fails to 27 ♗f4. Black is forced to worsen the position of his pieces still further.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **26** | **...** | **♗e5** |
| **27** | **♕e1** | |

Also perfectly adequate was 27 ♕e3 ♕a5 28 ♗d2, but there are already many ways to win.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **27** | **...** | **♕c5** |
| **28** | **♗d2** | **♔f6** |

---

1 19 ♕a5+ b6 20 ♕d2+ wins at once.

**29 ♖ac1**

Now everything is settled. It is absolutely impossible for Black to withstand the onslaught of all White's pieces.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **29** | **...** | **♕b6** |
| **30** | **♗e3** | **♕a6** |
| **31** | **♕b4** | |

Threatening, incidentally, 32 ♗b5.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **31** | **...** | **b5** |
| **32** | **♗xb5** | **♕b7** |
| **33** | **f4** | **♗b8** |
| **34** | **♗c6** | **1-0** |

Game 67

**Tal – Larsen**

*Candidates Match (10), Bled 1965*

Sicilian Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **c5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **♘c6** |
| **3** | **d4** | **cxd4** |
| **4** | **♘xd4** | **e6** |
| **5** | **♘c3** | **d6** |
| **6** | **♗e3** | **♘f6** |
| **7** | **f4** | **♗e7** |
| **8** | **♕f3** | |

This very active, highly critical system has not yet come into fashion. Yet it is a very dangerous weapon against the system chosen by Black. I can recall only two games which began in similar fashion, both between Suetin (White) and Peterson – in the Semi-final and Final of the 1964 USSR Team Championship.

**8 ... 0-0** *(D)*

This is what Peterson played in the Semi-final. A week later he had the chance to repeat the whole variation, and he played here 8...e5. After 9 ♘xc6 (9 ♘f5 ♗xf5 10 exf5 ♘d4!) 9...bxc6 10 fxe5 dxe5 11 ♗c4 0-0 12 0-0 ♕a5 13 a3 ♔h8 Suetin, by continuing 14 h3, could in my opinion have obtained a positional advantage.

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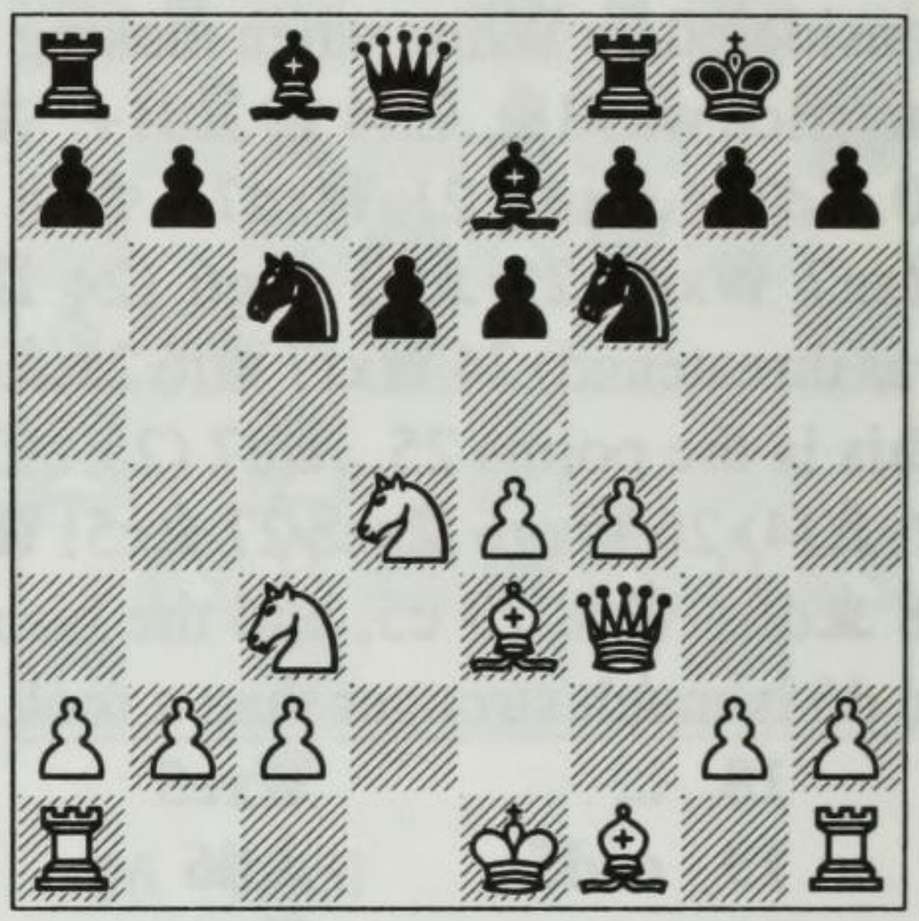


**9 0-0-0**

This would appear to be more energetic than 9 ♗e2 as Suetin played. The opening of his first game with Peterson was interesting: 9...♗d7 10 0-0-0 ♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 ♕a5 12 e5! dxe5 13 fxe5 ♗c6 14 exf6! ♗xf3 15 fxe7 ♖fe8 and now by 16 gxf3! White could have obtained a very dangerous attack. Probably Black should not allow the queen sacrifice. More accurate is 11...♗c6. Koblents and I had examined this position on a number of occasions in friendly games. Here is one of these, played on the morning of the 10th game. It does not pretend, of course, to be of theoretical value, but it does illustrate the dangers facing Black in this variation. 12 g4 ♕a5 13

g5 ♘d7 14 ♖hg1 b5 15 ♕h5 b4 16 ♖d3 bxc3 17 ♗xc3 ♕xa2? (17...♕a4) 18 ♖h3 ♗xe4 19 g6 ♗xg6 20 ♕xh7+ 1-0.

**9 ... ♕c7**

This normal Sicilian move leads Black into difficulties. It would appear that he should first have developed his queen's bishop. True, the immediate 10 g4 is now met by the rejoinder 10...♘xd4 11 ♖xd4 e5 12 ♖c4 ♗xg4! (13 ♕xg4 ♕xc4), but White can embark on his attack after first forcing the black queen to an inferior square.

**10 ♘db5! ♕b8**
**11 g4 a6**
**12 ♘d4 ♘xd4**
**13 ♗xd4 b5**

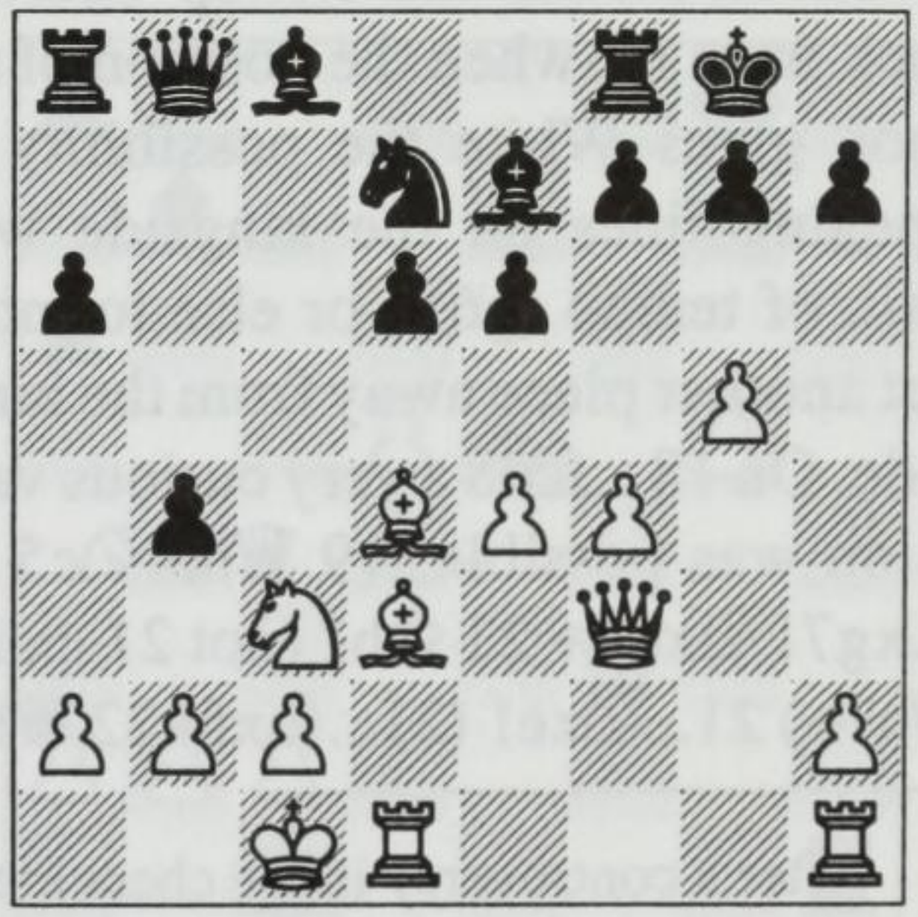
A very important moment. After the move made by Larsen it is obvious that White's attack will develop more quickly, which in such positions is very often the decisive factor. Black should definitely have played 13...e5 to which I would have replied 14 g5. Now the attempt to win the exchange fails: 14...♗g4 15 ♕g3 ♗xd1? 16 gxf6 ♗xf6 17 ♘d5 and Black loses (17...exd4 18 ♘xf6+ ♔h8 19 ♖g1, or 17...♕d8 18 ♗b6), but by continuing 15...exd4 (instead of 15...♗xd1) 16 gxf6 dxc3 17 fxe7 cxb2+ 18 ♔b1 ♗xd1, Black keeps quite good defensive chances, since the position has become considerably simplified.

**14 g5 ♘d7**

How should White develop his attack? At first I wanted to play the prophylactic 15 a3 so as to maintain the knight on c3. Variations of the type 15...b4 16 axb4 ♕xb4 17 ♕h5 ♖b8 18 ♖d3 ♕xb2+ 19 ♔d1 appeared quite attractive, but then my attention was drawn to the idea of the knight sacrifice on d5, opening lines for the attack. On this occasion I fairly easily persuaded myself not to reject such a tempting, though not unhazardous, idea. The amusing variation which I found at this moment (cf. the note to Black's 18th move), reinforced the conviction that to refrain from such a sacrifice would be simply shameful. All this time the after-taste of the fourth game was somehow weighing on my mind, and I even used a sort of internal monologue in order to make up my mind: 'If in the end, Misha, you are destined to lose this match, there is no need for the reason to be cowardice'. And so ...

**15 ♗d3 b4** *(D)*

On the more cautious 15...♗b7 I was now planning to play 16 a3.




**16 ♘d5! exd5**

Otherwise the knight will give itself up even closer, on f6.

**17 exd5**

The piece sacrifice has something of a positional nature. Black's pieces are grouped on the queenside (rook on a8, queen on b8 and bishop on c8), and it is by no means easy for them to come to the aid of their king. The open e-file is a barrier. Besides, both white bishops are aimed at the enemy king, and the standard combination with successive bishop sacrifices on h7 and g7 is threatened. Black cannot defend against this without making positional concessions. On 17...g6 White can continue the attack by 18 h4, or by 18 ♕h3!, which is, in my opinion, more active. Larsen tries to cover h7 with another pawn[1].

**17 ... f5**

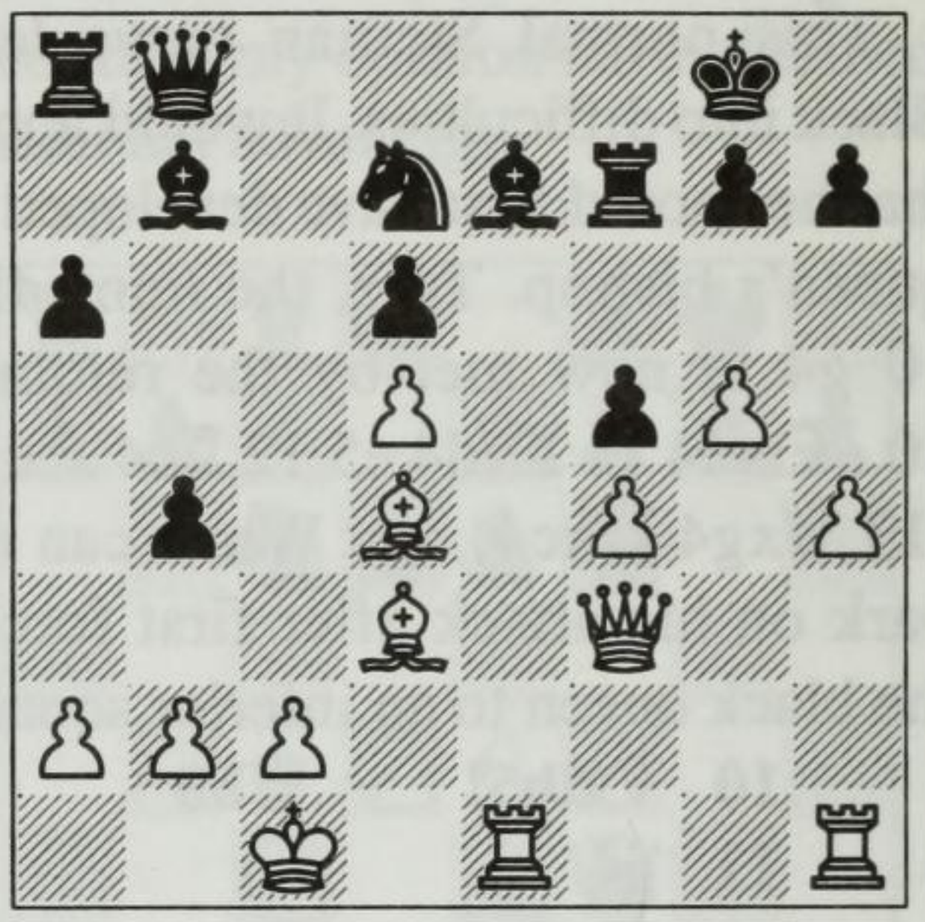
Now White's dark-squared bishop is too strong.

**18 ♖de1**

Black has an unpleasant choice: either to defend his bishop with his rook from f7, when the position of the rook gives White the possibility of opening lines on the kingside with gain of tempo (g6!), or else to move yet another piece away from the kingside. On 18...♗d8 a very curious variation was possible: 19 ♕h5 ♘c5 20 ♗xg7! ♘xd3+ 21 ♔b1 (not 21 cxd3? ♕c7+) 21...♘xe1 (21...♘xf4 22 ♕h6) 22 g6 ♔xg7 23 ♕xh7+ ♔f6 24 g7 ♖f7 25 g8♘ mate!

**18 ... ♖f7**

**19 h4 ♗b7** *(D)*



*W*

**20 ♗xf5**

Here the state of the match had its effect. If this position had occurred in any game but the final one, I would no doubt have played more sharply: 20 g6 hxg6 21 h5 g5 22 ♗xf5 (weaker is 22 h6 g4 23 hxg7 ♗f6 or 23...♘f6 24 ♖xe7 gxf3 25 ♗xf6 ♖xe7) with very dangerous threats. Black cannot play, for instance, 22...♖xf5 23 ♖xe7 ♘e5 because of 24 h6! ♘xf3 25 h7+ ♔f8 26 ♖xg7 with inevitable mate. However, at this moment I wanted to make certain, and at the board I could not find a forced win after 22...♗f6 23 ♗e6 ♕f8! (not 23...♗xd4 24 fxg5 and g6). On the question of whether there was one I had no doubt (I am just as

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1 After a controversy in the chess literature lasting some three years, it was discovered that in reply to 17...g6 White should continue 18 h4 or 18 ♖de1 but not 18 ♕h3 because of 18...♘f6 19 ♕h6 ♘h5 when White has nothing to show for the sacrificed material – *Editor's note.*

certain now), but the experience of previous games warned me against wasting time on the calculation of long complicated variations – that is how to get into time-trouble. Besides, after the move which I made in the game my position remains highly favourable.

**20 ... ♖xf5**

On 20...♘f8 White can simply increase the pressure by defending his bishop with his queen, and renewing the not-yet-forgotten threat of ♗xh7+.

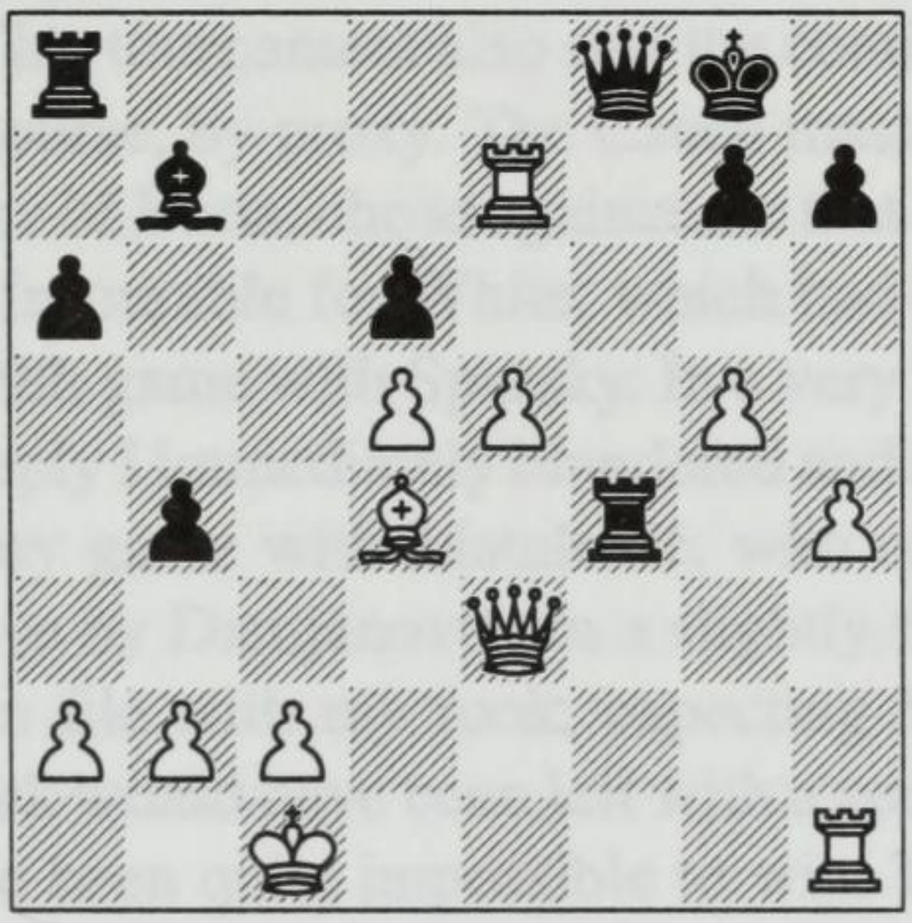
**21 ♖xe7 ♘e5**

On the passive defence 21...♖f7 Black is crushed by 22 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 23 g6+ hxg6 24 h5 baring the king 'to his last thread'. The Dane tries to seize the initiative by tactical means, but White is prepared for this.

**22 ♕e4 ♕f8!**

**23 fxe5! ♖f4**

**24 ♕e3** *(D)*



*B*

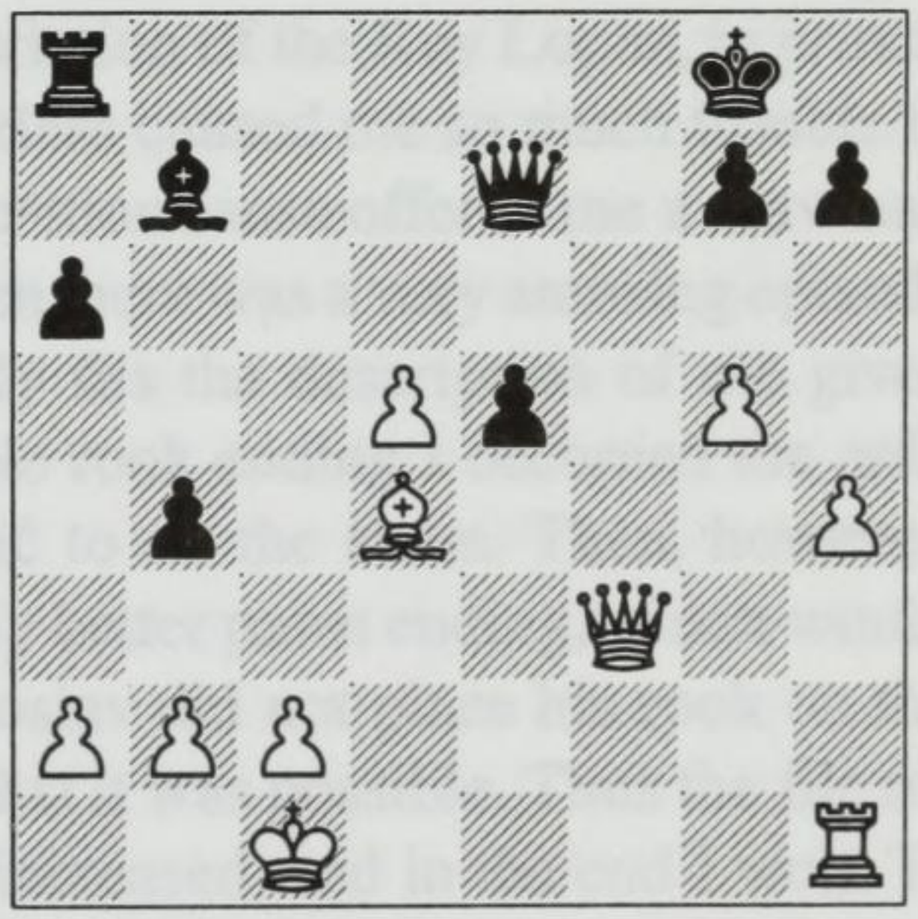
**24 ... ♖f3**

After this move White wins without great difficulty. The basic variation of the combination beginning with 20 ♗xf5 was 24...♗xd5 25 exd6 ♖xd4 (after 25...♗xh1 26 ♖xg7+ Black's scattered pieces are helpless) 26 ♕xd4! (weaker is 26 ♖e1 ♕f4!) 26...♗xh1 27 b3. Here Black probably does best to return the piece immediately by 27...♗f3 28 ♕c4+ ♔h8 29 ♖f7 ♕xd6 30 ♖xf3 when he has some chances of saving the game. Attempts to maintain his material advantage are hopeless; the h-pawn, on reaching the sixth rank, inflicts the decisive blow. The exchange of rooks by 27...♖e8 also leads to defeat after 28 ♕e5 ♖xe7 29 dxe7 ♕e8 30 ♕e6+ ♔h8 31 h5 ♗f3 32 h6 or 31...♗c6 32 g6, with the irresistible threat of 33 ♕f7. True, at this point the Dane had only about seven minutes left on his clock.

**25 ♕e2 ♕xe7**

No better is 25...♕f4+ 26 ♕d2 ♖f1+ 27 ♖xf1 ♕xf1+ 28 ♕d1 or 25...♗xd5 26 exd6.

**26 ♕xf3 dxe5** *(D)*



*W*

**27 ♖e1 ♖d8**

The ending after 27...♖f8 28 ♖xe5 ♕xe5 29 ♕xf8+ ♔xf8 30 ♗xe5 is easily won for White; Black has no time to capture on d5 in view of 31 ♗d6+.

**28 ♖xe5 ♕d6**
**29 ♕f4!**

With the help of this simple piece of tactics (29...♗xd5 30 ♖e8+) White keeps his two extra pawns. The finish is straightforward.

**29 ... ♖f8**
**30 ♕e4 b3**

There is nothing better.

**31 axb3 ♖f1+**
**32 ♔d2 ♕b4+**
**33 c3 ♕d6**
**34 ♗c5**

A not altogether necessary (there were many ways to win), but amusing, concluding combination.

**34 ... ♕xc5**
**35 ♖e8+ ♖f8**
**36 ♕e6+ ♔h8**
**37 ♕f7 1-0**

# 7 A Candidate Again

After an absence of more than a year from tournament play (this time had been spent playing matches) it was 1966 when I set off for Sarajevo. I have already said that I play with particular pleasure in Yugoslavia, and with success, and the traditional Sarajevo Tournament was no exception.

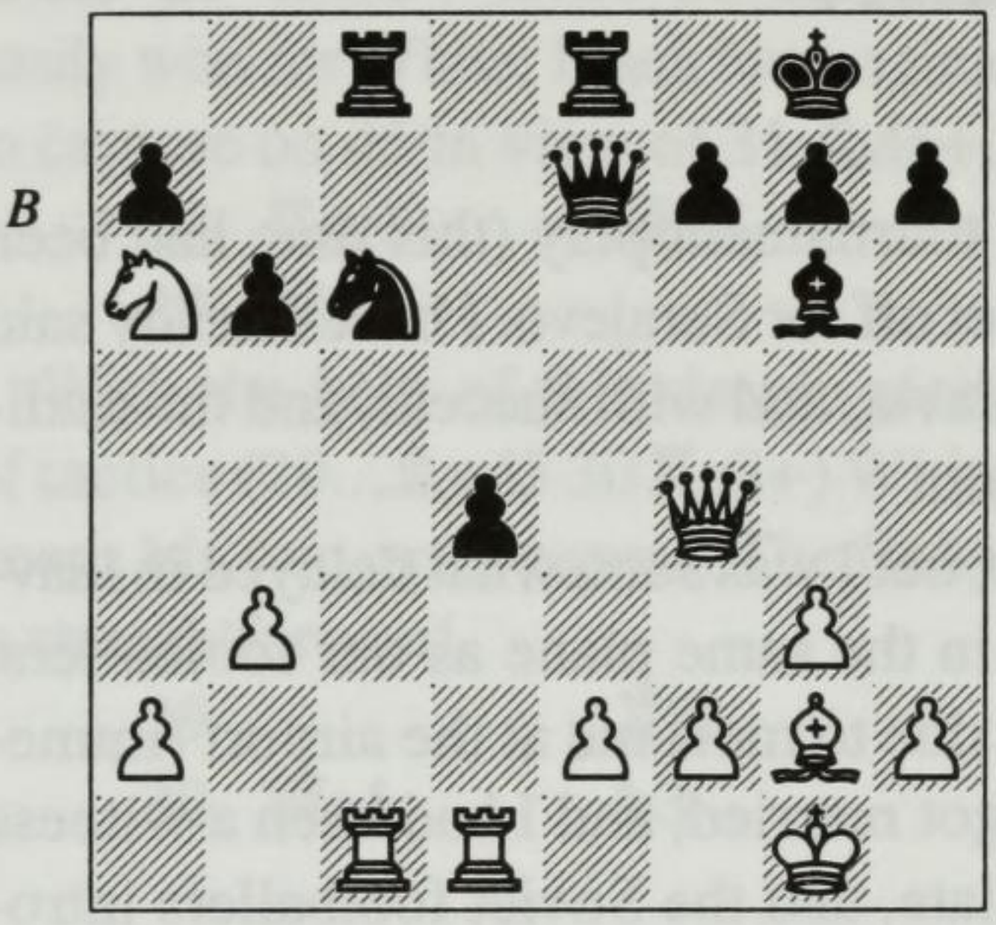
I do not recall what it was that held me up, but I was somewhat delayed in leaving Moscow, and I flew out to Yugoslavia in the same plane as our footballers. Petar Smederavac, my son's godfather, was due to meet me at the airport (immediately after my match with Larsen he had got married, and I had been a witness at the wedding), but he was a few minutes late, and the Soviet footballers introduced me to their Yugoslav colleagues as ... the Soviet team masseur. Then Petar appeared, took me away in another car, and the footballers were 'orphaned'.

Right from the start in Sarajevo, I played several interesting games, including one with Damjanović, against whom I held a grudge. The point was that, during the match with Spassky, Mata had also been playing in Tbilisi, in an International Tournament, and in an interview had characterised me as follows:

'Tal plays the opening like a good Grandmaster, the middlegame better than a good Grandmaster, and the endgame like an ordinary master'. Such a formulation very much displeased me, and you will understand that it was with great pleasure that I exchanged queens in our game, especially since the resulting ending was clearly in my favour.

This tournament also saw the continuation of my duel with Spassky, this time, of course, by proxy. The Czech master Jansa, who was both a friend and an admirer of Boris, chose against me that same variation of the Ruy Lopez, in principle favourable for White, which had nevertheless caused me so much trouble in the 9th game with Spassky. In a very sharp position Jansa offered me a draw and in reply I immediately blundered and lost. Then there was a very amusing episode in my game with Matulović, who completely fits the description of me given above by Damjanović. In a slightly favourable rook ending I occupied the only open file with my rook, expecting Matulović to do the same. Then, however, Black would have been left with a very slightly better pawn ending, which would have been quite impossible to win. The Yugoslav did not place his rook on the open file either straight away, or at any time that it was possible. Thus the file remained in my hands for ever, my advantage increased, and in the end I won. To the question, why had he not exchanged rooks, Matulović gave a quite unexpected reply: 'I haven't yet studied pawn endings!'

There was an attractive little finish to the following game.



**Tal – Pachman**
*Sarajevo, 1966*

Black incautiously captured the pawn by **20...♕xe2** and after **21 ♘c7 ♖e7 22 ♗f3!** was forced to give up his queen: **22...♕xd1+ 23 ♖xd1 ♖exc7 24 ♖c1 h5 25 ♔g2** and then resign (**1-0**). It turns out that the natural 22...♕e5 is met by 23 ♖xc6 ♕xf4 24 ♘d5!!, when the white knight creates havoc all over the place.

After ten rounds I was trailing the leader, the Yugoslav player Cirić, by 1½ points! The future Grandmaster, usually so peaceable, was thirsting for a fight in Sarajevo. He had scored eight wins, one defeat, and only one draw!

We met in the 11th round, and the previous day I had read in a sports paper a somewhat flowery compliment addressed by him to me. In an interview, Cirić had said that he thought he had good chances of first place, and that if Spassky had been playing instead of Tal, he would consider his victory already assured, whereas, as it was, everything was not yet clear.

I did my best to confirm his fears, and won our game. There was an amusing finish to it. For this encounter, apart from the normal fans with a good understanding of chess, many sports fans arrived. In the time-scramble, with the demonstrators somewhat behind the players, Cirić obtained a second queen on the 39th move, but resigned on the 40th, and shook my hand. On seeing the handshake and the two black queens on the board, the less experienced spectators shouted 'Bravo, Cira!', while at the same time the more qualified section of the public was shouting 'Bravo, Tal!' They were all quietened by the demonstrator who hung up on the board the sign 'White won'.

Thus, when the last round began, we found ourselves level, and that is how we finished.

Once again there came a break in my chess life. It was due to the fact that, after a 3-year interval, my diseased kidney made itself felt, and also that there took

place in Moscow the match for the World Championship, at which I once again fulfilled my duties as a journalist. In short, it was only in the autumn that I once again sat down at the board.

I began the Kislovodsk Tournament with a defeat at the hands of the Moldavian master Lutikov, but then my fortunes sharply improved until my kidney began playing up. For several days, the question of my leaving the tournament was debated, but I decided to play on to the end, thinking that there was no reason why the talented Lutikov, similar to me in his chess convictions, should suffer because of me. I dissipated the whole of my plus score, and finished only on the 50% mark.

It was therefore not without some apprehension that I began my next tournament. All the time I was haunted by the thought: what if my illness should make itself felt during the Team Championship of the Country for Sports Societies. I could not avoid taking part: the tournament on the top board would be extremely strong, and Botvinnik would be playing there. After declining to play in the Candidates Matches the previous year, he was pretty 'hungry', and played with great enthusiasm.

JOURNALIST. *The joke was made that, in this team tournament, all the World Championship Matches of recent years were continued.*

CHESS PLAYER. Yes, on the top board the following games took place: Botvinnik-Smyslov, Botvinnik-Tal, Botvinnik-Petrosian, Petrosian-Spassky, as well as matches from the Candidates Cycle: Spassky-Tal and Spassky-Keres.

Prior to the last round I had succeeded in winning just one game, though I had not suffered any defeats. Then I faced the leader, Botvinnik. After it, the score in my games with Mikhail Moiseyevich was finally levelled: after all, I had won the first match against him by 4 points, but had lost the return by 5; in this game I first won a theoretical duel, then a pawn, and in the adjourned position my material advantage had risen three-fold.

Besides our game, there were two other games from the match unfinished, including one on a ladies' board in a very complicated position. After glancing at the Tal-Botvinnik game, the team trainer and I spent two whole nights analysing the ladies' adjourned position. In the morning, we woke our lady player, quickly showed her the results of our night-long analysis, and set off for the tournament hall.

The adjourned games were resumed. That evening the deciding match of the final round was due to be held, in which Botvinnik would play Petrosian. Without any ulterior motive, I went up to a representative of the 'Trud' team – Botvinnik's team – and expressed my sincere admiration for the play of their constant leader.

The representative's reaction stunned me:

'Then agree a draw with Botvinnik, and we will agree to a draw on the ladies' board, where we stand better!'

I was taken aback, and I didn't know what to reply. The representative immediately went up to Botvinnik, who was thinking over his move, and said something to him. The latter raised his head, waved the representative away, and stopped his clock in a sign of resignation. In the end Geller was the winner on the leaders' board, and we three – Botvinnik, Petrosian and I – finished half a point behind.

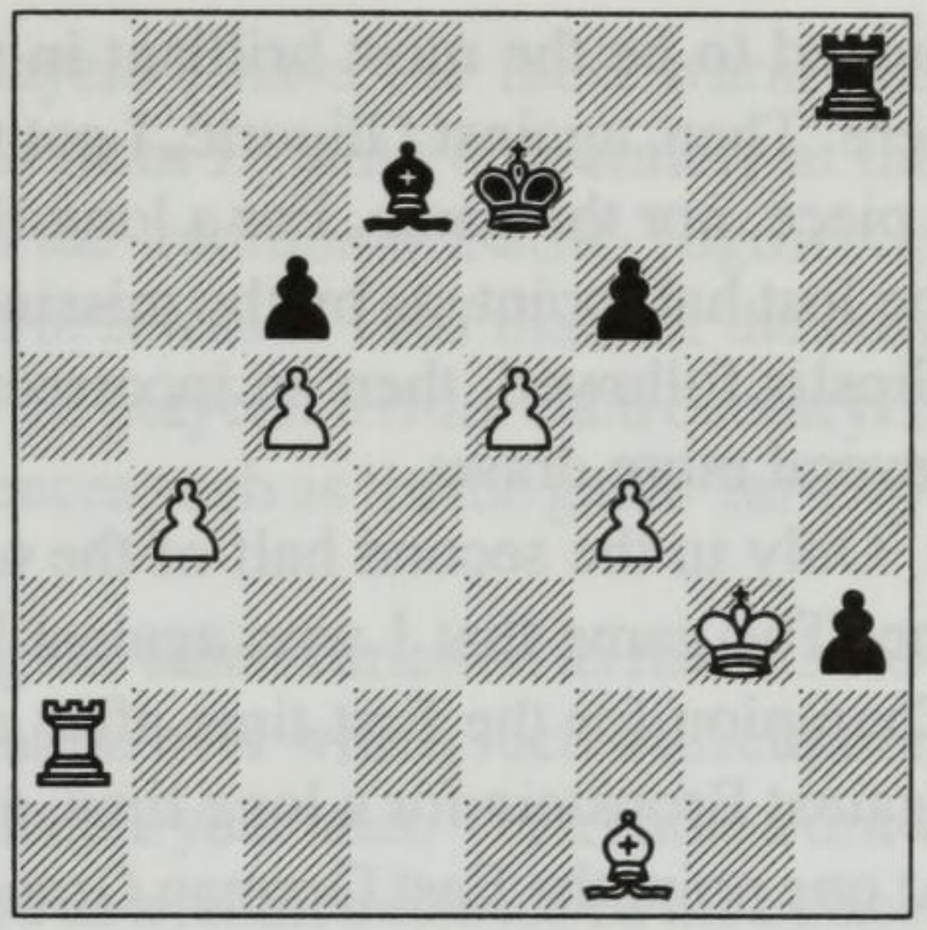
The end of the year was crowded with events, but began in an unpleasant way. At the Olympiad in Havana an unknown man 'caught' me with a 'tactical blow': a bottle to the head. As a result, the 'first game' of the Olympiad, Tal-N.N., ended in my defeat, close to a rout.

However, this only led to my missing the first four rounds, in which we played against Morocco and India, and in which I might have hoped to improve my individual score. Perhaps this shock even had a beneficial effect on me, just like the operation for appendicitis in 1959, for I played with great enthusiasm. Despite missing the first four rounds, and the final one, I nevertheless played more games than the other members of our team. As many as three of the games played in Havana are given here, and of these the encounter with Robert Byrne was of special significance. As is well known, the Soviet team did not want to be given four points by default against the Americans, who did not turn up to play*[Editor's note: The match had originally been scheduled for a day on which Fischer could not play (for religious reasons), and rather than play without their first board, the USA team did not appear for the match.], and with our agreement the match was set for another day. It was my game with Byrne that decided its fate.

Before the last round, when the success of our team was already assured, I was allowed by our captain to fly out a little earlier than my colleagues: I was to be one of the first Soviet players to participate in a tournament in Spain, in Palma de Mallorca.

I began, as if by inertia after Havana, in very lively style, and at the start scored something like 5 out of 5. The Spaniard Arturo Pomar was also playing well. Earlier I had read a lot about him, almost the only pupil of Alekhine. I considered my most important game to be the one against Trifunović, the only player in the tournament with a plus score against me. Here is the finish (*see diagram on next page*):

White's sealed move was **45 e6!!** There followed **45...♗xe6 46 ♖a7+ ♗d7 47 ♔h2! ♖h5 48 b5! ♖xc5 49 ♗xh3 f5 50 bxc6 ♖xc6 51 ♗xf5 ♖d6 52 ♔g3 ♔e8 53 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 54 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 55 ♔g4 ♔e6 56 ♔g5 ♔f7 57 ♔f5 1-0**




**Tal – Trifunović**
*Palma de Mallorca, 1966*

The final rounds took place after a specially organised tourist bull-fight, with the participation of the players and some mini-bulls. One such calf 'offended' Pomar, driving him into the arena. Perhaps this defeat, not so much physical as moral, affected Pomar, for the following day he lost, fully opening the way for me to first place.

JOURNALIST. *But you, after all, also went into the arena! Tell me, please; if in Havana the 'additional game' with N.N. had occurred accidentally, why in Mallorca was it necessary to play a similar 'game' with a real live bull?*

CHESS PLAYER. Firstly, it was really more like a calf. Secondly, I had heard so much about the bull-fight – from Bizet to Hemingway – that it would be unthinkable to decline to take part in one in such convenient circumstances. True, at that moment, I wasn't to know that the following morning the local papers would display our photograph (that of the calf and me) with the headline: 'The first Soviet bull-fighter in Spain!' Three draws at the end of the tournament gave me first place. The year 1966 was over.

The New Year found me in Tbilisi, once again in the role of correspondent, at the USSR Championship. Since it was a Zonal Tournament, and since I already had the right to play in the Candidates cycle, I considered that it would be somewhat awkward for me to play, since to some extent I could influence the distribution of the places, involuntarily fulfilling the role of 'controller'.

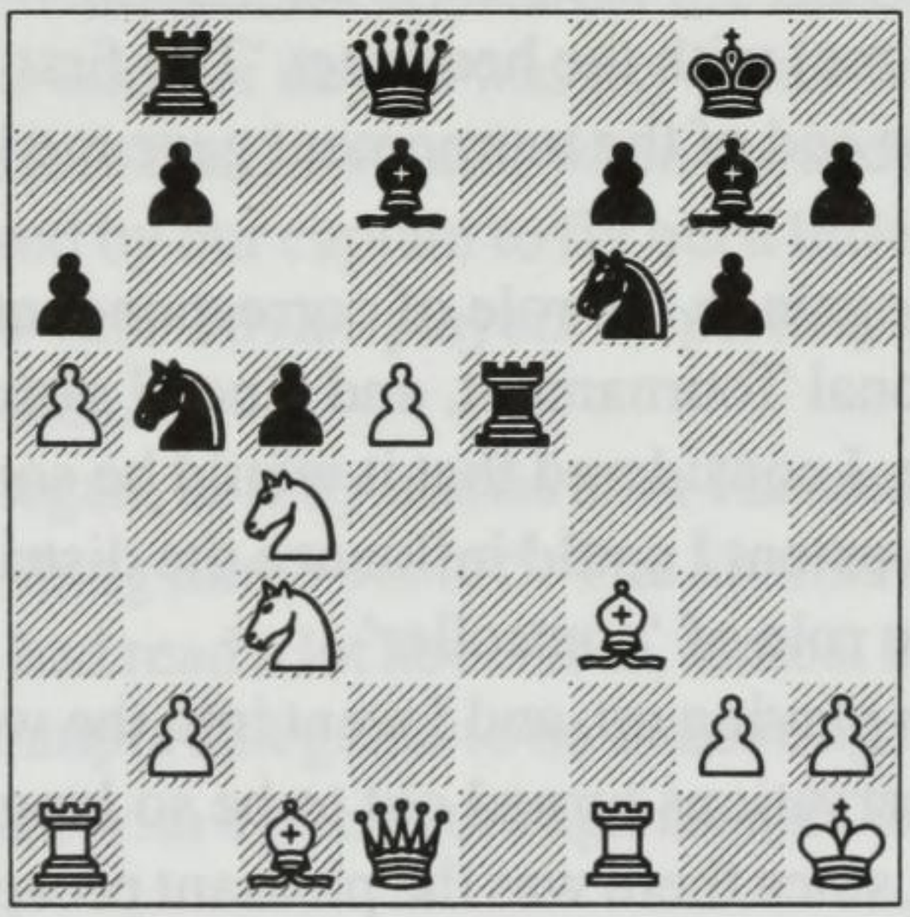
In the spring my kidney once again began playing up, and I went into the well-known Botkin hospital in Moscow. The observations turned out to be so lengthy that from there, to put it bluntly, I did a bunk, since there was the pleasant prospect of playing in a very strong International Tournament in Moscow, dedicated to the 50th Anniversary of the Great October Revolution. Starved of chess, I began fairly successfully, with wins over Filip and Bilek (the combination in which was

judged to be the most brilliant in the tournament). Both these games are given here. Then, against Gligorić, I got the order of moves wrong, and so did not win a piece, nor the game. For a long time after this I was unsettled, not so much by the lost half point, as by the missing of a simple tactical possibility. A draw with Gipslis followed, then an incorrect sacrifice against Keres, simply refuted, and several more draws.

Only in the second half of the tournament did things go somewhat better for me. The game that I won against Petrosian is given here; I defeated the World Champion for the first time after a 10-year interval. I also gained my first win against Bronstein for a long time, and defeated Uhlmann in an amusing struggle. At one point the East German Grandmaster thought for so long that my colleague Gipslis, who had already finished his game, went off to hear *The Barber of Seville*, but was disappointed by the performance, and left after the first act, and once again made for the tournament hall. To his amazement, he found Uhlmann still thinking over the same move! His meditation lasted for 1 hour 40 minutes! I would have laughed if at that time anyone had said to me that in our next game Uhlmann would beat this record, but that's just what happened: Uhlmann thought for 1 hour 50 minutes!! I suffered one more defeat, playing the King's Indian Defence most unsuccessfully against Portisch, and as a result shared 2nd-5th places with Smyslov, Bobotsov and Gipslis. The winner was Leonid Stein.

My next event, the Team Tournament of the USSR Peoples' Spartakiad, was also in Moscow. Latvia found itself in a strong preliminary group, from which we only reached the second final group. I scored 6 points out of 9, without defeat, and played several interesting games.

*B*



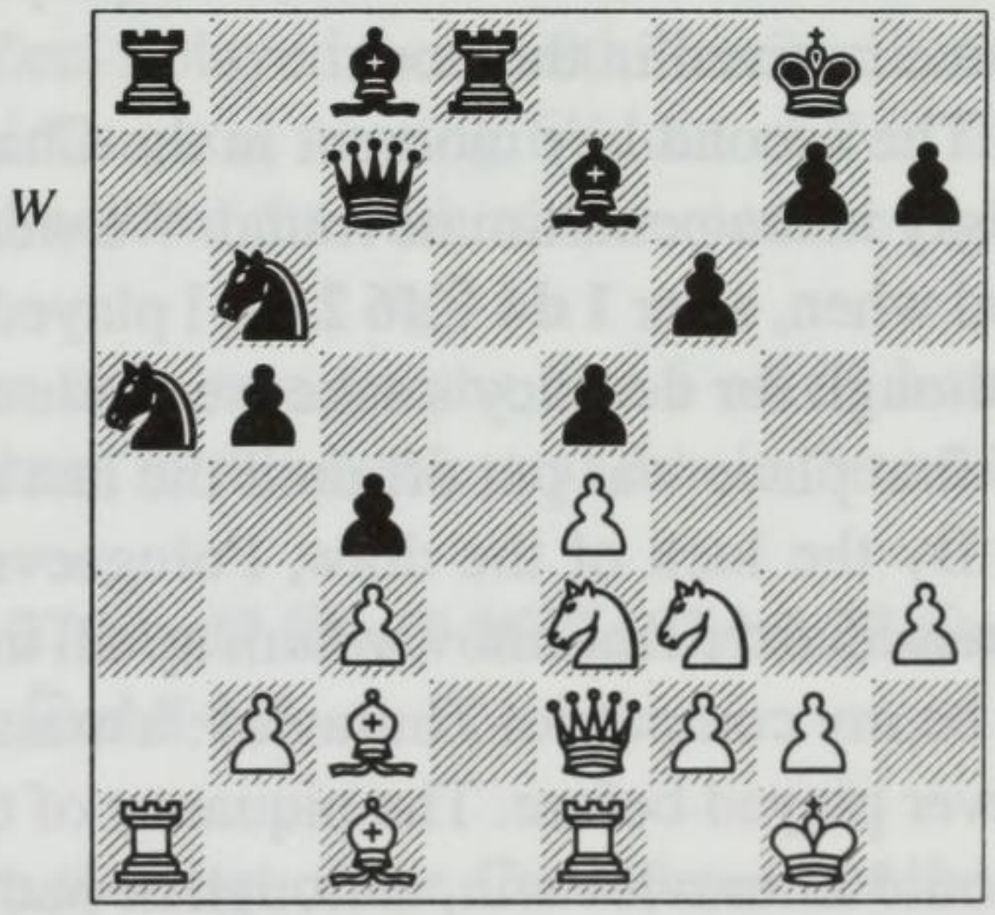
**Ufimtsev – Tal**
*Spartakiad Preliminary*
*Moscow 1967*

**18...♖f5 19 ♘e3 ♖f4 20 ♘e2 ♖h4 21 g3 ♖e4! 22 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 23 ♘f4 ♘d4 24 ♔g2 ♕e7 25 ♖e1 h5 26 ♖a3 ♖e8 27 ♘e2 ♗h3+! 28 ♔xh3 ♘g5+ 0-1**

I have already said that with Yugoslav players I have the most warm and friendly relations, but this does not prevent us from fighting desperately at the chessboard. Now I played for the first time in the traditional USSR-Yugoslavia Match, which has been held regularly since 1956. It was in 1967 that, for the only time, the match was made into a tournament of 12 players, 6 from each country. It is still with a smile that in the press I read references such as 'in the game Tal-Gipslis from the USSR-Yugoslavia Match, 1967...'

In the first round I played Gligorić, adopting the same variation as in the Moscow Tournament a few months earlier, the variation over which such a discussion was to flare up between us in the Candidates Match a year later. Then came a draw with Korchnoi, who set an exceptional pace, and as a result outstripped his closest rivals – Gligorić and myself – by one and a half points.

Then, after a lengthy stay in hospital, this time in Riga, I played two games with my old friend Victor Ciocaltea in the equally traditional match between Latvia and Rumania. After this came the Championship of the Soviet Union in Kharkov. It was the first and, God grant, the last experiment of running the USSR Championship on the Swiss System. After all, the overwhelming majority of the players who gathered in Kharkov (and there were more than a hundred) played interesting chess, but were not serious contenders for the gold medal. No arguments in favour of the system – the greater number of participants, a school for the young, etc. – can hide its main drawback: the influence of Lady Luck. I began with three wins. Then came a slight setback of several draws, but one of them was judged to be the most brilliant game of the Championship, and both players received a special prize.

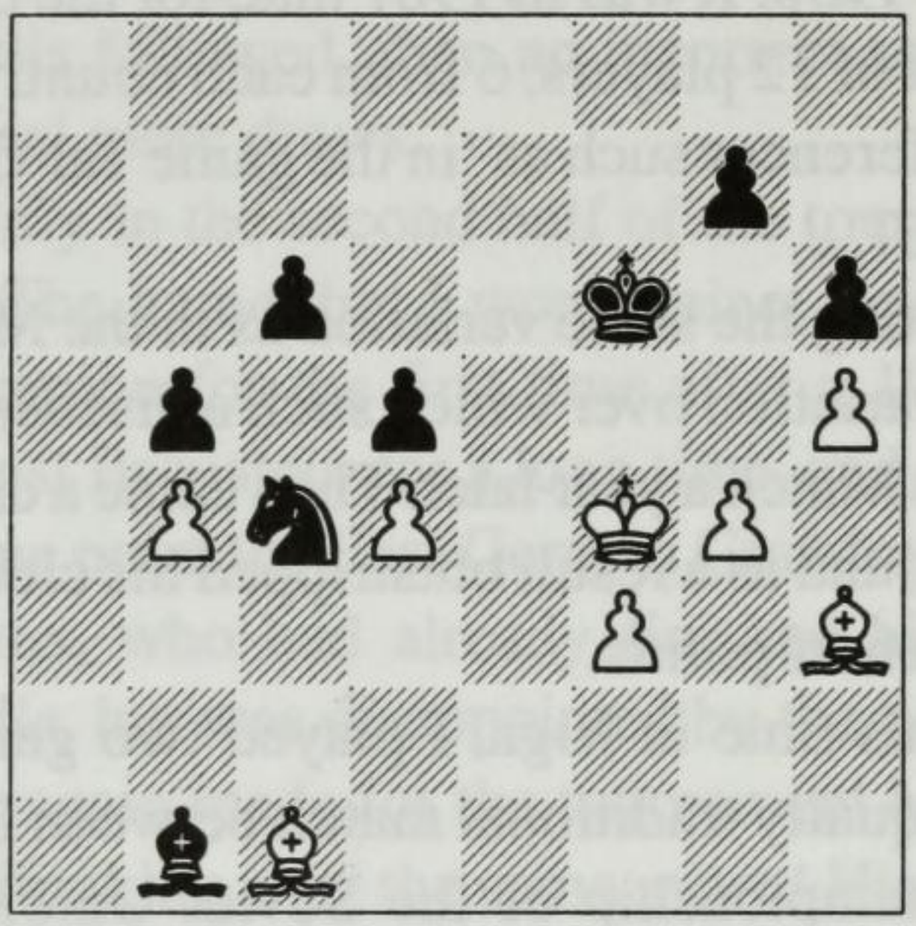


**Tal – Zheliandinov**
*USSR Ch, Kharkov 1967*

**21 ♘d5 ♘xd5 22 exd5 ♗b7 23 ♘h4 ♗f8 24 ♕h5 g6 25 ♘xg6! hxg6 26 ♗xg6 ♘b3 27 ♗f5! ♗xd5 28 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 29 ♖d1! ♕f7! 30 ♗g6 ♕g7 31 ♖xd5**

**♘xc1 32 ♗e4 ♕h6 33 ♕g4+ ♗g7 34 ♖xb5 ♖d8 35 ♗d5+ ♔h8 36 ♗xc4 ♘d3 37 g3 ♕c1+ 38 ♔g2 ♘e1+ 39 ♔h2 ♕g5 40 ♕e4 ♕d2 41 ♕h4+ ½-½**

As an example of a win by me in an ending, I give the end of the following game:



**Tal – Antoshin**
*USSR Ch, Kharkov 1967*

**45...c5!? 46 bxc5 ♗d3 47 c6 b4 48 c7 ♘d6 49 ♔e3 ♗a6 50 ♔d2 ♔g5 51 ♔e1+ ♔h4 52 ♗f1** It is amusing that all White's pieces have returned to their starting positions. **52...♗xf1 53 ♔xf1 ♔g3 54 ♔e2 b3 55 ♔d3 ♔xf3 56 ♗xh6! ♔xg4 57 ♗xg7 ♔xh5 58 ♗e5 ♘c8 59 ♔c3 ♔g6 60 ♔xb3 ♔f7 61 ♔b4 ♔e6 62 ♔b5 ♔d7 63 ♔a6 ♔e6 64 ♗f4 ♘e7 65 ♔a7 ♘c8+ 66 ♔b8 ♔d7 67 ♔b7 ♘e7 68 ♗c1 1-0**

The first of the decisive games in the Championship proved to be the encounter with Grandmaster Vasiukov, who played some interesting chess in Kharkov. This game is given in the book.

The second key moment in the Championship was my game against Polugaevsky in the penultimate round. We were leading with the same number of points, and when, after **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4**, I played **2...e6**, Lev offered me a draw. I accepted, although for decency's sake we made a further 12 moves or so, and the question of first place was put off until the last round.

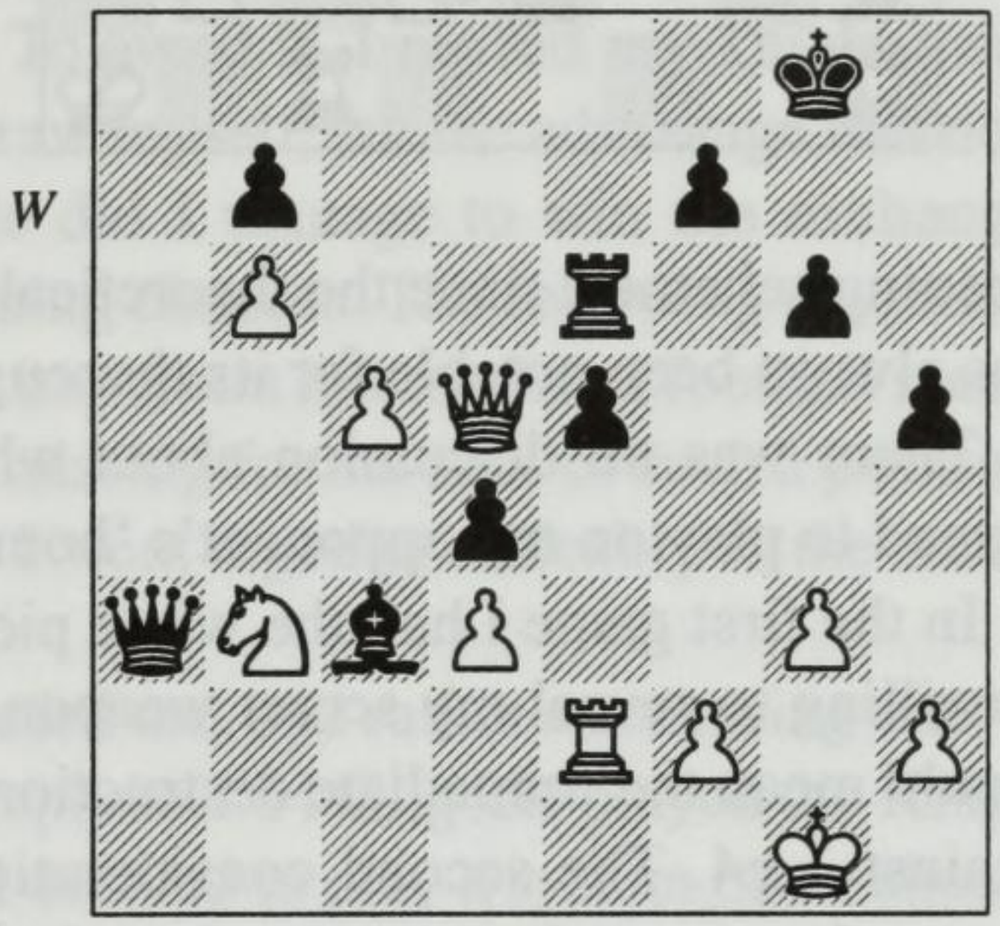
By the luck of the draw, Polugaevsky, much to his displeasure, had to play Grandmaster Kholmov, whom up till then he had never beaten. My opponent was to be my compatriot Zhuravlev: a master from Liepay who, as it happened, I had never played before. The piquancy of the situation was increased by the fact that should Zhuravlev win, although he had never qualified for even a USSR Championship semi-final, he would become a Grandmaster of the Soviet Union!

Polugaevsky was very upset by the result of the draw, and I took great pleasure in teasing Lev, 'confidentially' informing him that in Riga an urgent meeting of

the Chess Federation was being held in order to decide the question: did Latvia want a USSR Champion, or a new Grandmaster. That evening I went into Polugaevsky's room, and informed him that the Federation had decided the question in favour of the USSR Champion.

Of course, of this 'meeting' and 'decision' of the Latvian Chess Federation, Zhuravlev knew nothing.

The following day, having completely pulled himself together, Polugaevsky scored a clear-cut win over Kholmov, while this is how my game concluded:




**Tal – Zhuravlev**
*USSR Ch, Kharkov 1967*

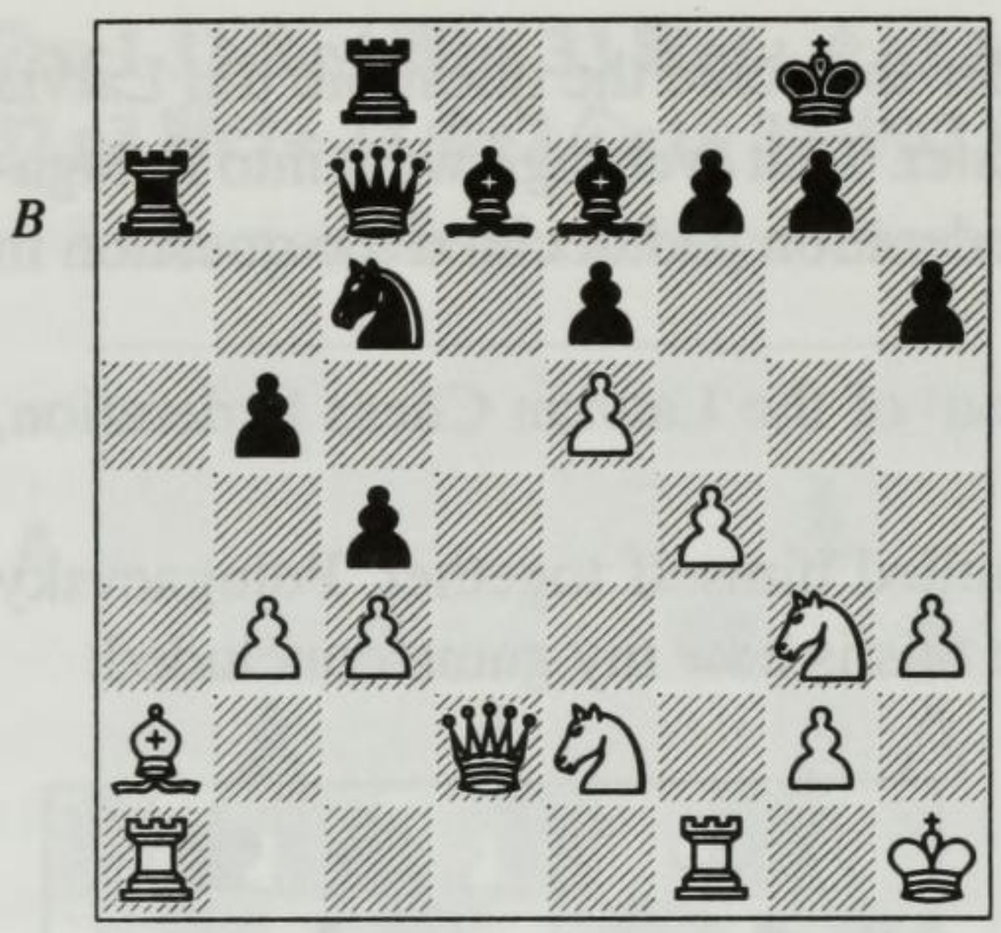
**34 ♕xb7! ♕xb3 35 ♕c8+ ♔g7 36 b7 ♕d1+ 37 ♔g2 ♕xe2 38 b8♕ ♔f6 39 ♕h8+ ♔f5 40 ♕bg8 ♖f6 41 ♕gg7 1-0**

The following year, 1968, brought me few laurels, and it all started in January, at the traditional tournament in Wijk aan Zee. I played there with Korchnoi, and the Leningrad player once again set a furious pace, scoring 6½ out of 7 at the start. From my first games I felt that I had neither the enthusiasm, nor the right sort of mood, for chess.

From the whole tournament there were only two games that I could boast about. The game against Donner is given here in this book, and this is the other (*see diagram on next page*):

**24...♖ca8 25 bxc4 b4! 26 ♖ad1 ♖xa2 27 ♕xd7 ♕xd7 28 ♖xd7 b3 29 ♘c1 ♗h4 30 ♘e4 ♖a1 31 ♖b7 ♖b8 32 ♖xb8+ ♘xb8 0-1**

This tournament was my last test before the start of the Candidates matches, and showed that, to put it mildly, I was not in my best form. This was also confirmed by the start of my match with Gligorić. In preparing for this encounter, Koblents and I realised that a duel was likely to develop in one or more topical

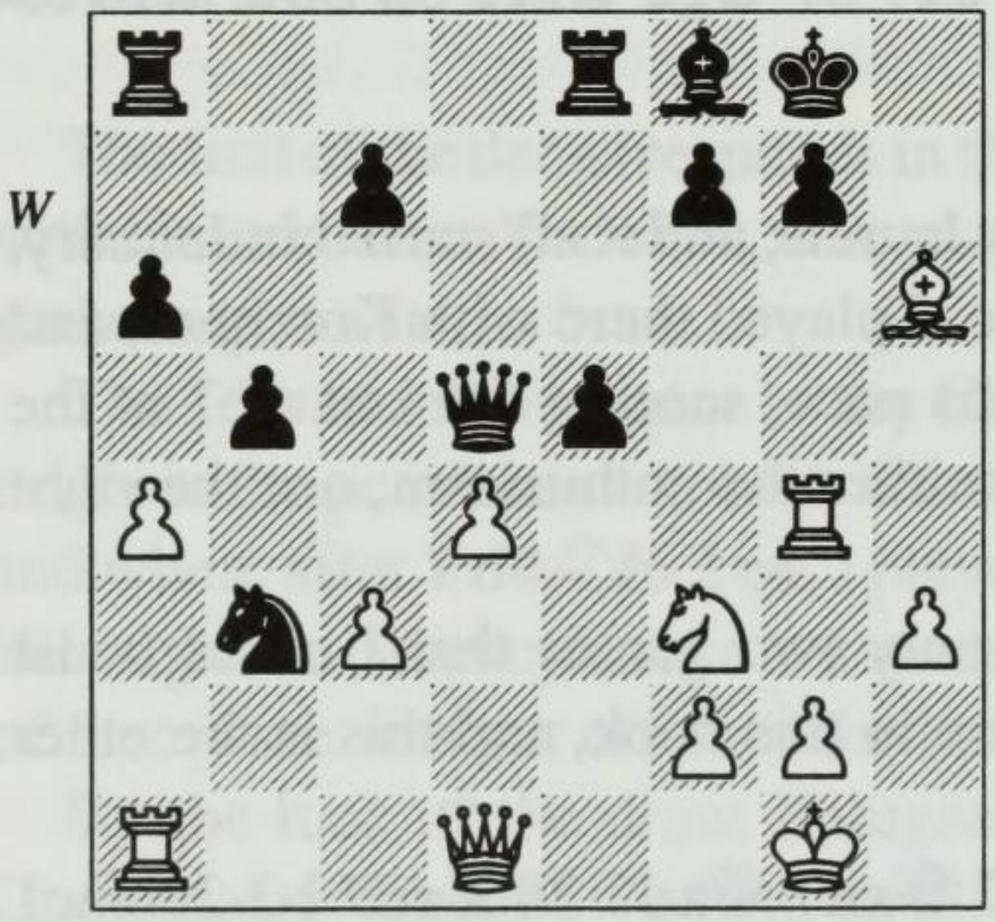



**Rossolimo – Tal**
*Wijk aan Zee, 1968*

opening schemes, since the theoretical preparation of the Yugoslav Grandmaster has always been notable for its thoroughness and soundness.

There was no discussion about where the match should be held: I readily agreed to play on my opponent's 'home ground' in Belgrade.

In the first game I had the white pieces, and at the start I was subconsciously unwilling to reveal my secret weapon immediately. On the other hand, success would mean the immediate destruction of Gligoric's favourite and main defence against 1 e4. The second consideration outweighed, and after spending some three minutes on the opening, I made the preparatory move




**Tal – Gligorić**
*Candidates Match (1), Belgrade 1968*

**22 ♖a3** In the overcrowded hall of the Palace of Syndicates, where we were playing, the noise level rose: whether it was a joke or not, the rook had placed itself *en prise* to the black bishop.

Gligorić sank into thought, and after 40 minutes found the correct way to neutralise White's innovation: **22...bxa4 23 ♖xa4 ♖ab8**.

Subsequently I could have obtained an ending with an extra pawn. but this would have been practically equivalent to agreeing a draw. Preferring a sharp game, I avoided this, then at some point blundered, and in the adjourned position Gligorić found a precise way to win.

The second game again featured a theoretical duel, this time in the Nimzo-Indian Defence where we had prepared an improvement in Gligoric's favourite variation. As a result, Gligorić immediately offered a draw as White, but I had to try to win one back and began attempting to obtain more from the position than was justified. Suddenly I saw for White an excellent combination (however, analysis later showed it to be incorrect). To avoid it, I moved my knight away from the centre, and nervously offered a draw myself, but the advantage was now with Gligorić. Only in the time-scramble did I manage to win the exchange, which, however, did not give any real winning chances. The following day, when the game was to be resumed, there was an important international football match in Belgrade, which was clearly not worth missing for the sake of such a position. So, after agreeing to a draw, Gligorić and I went together amicably to the match between Yugoslavia and France.

In the third game another misfortune befell me, and rather an amusing one. In preparing for the match, we knew that in reply to 1 d4 Gligorić played the King's Indian Defence 90 times out of 100, and I decided to play a system often chosen by Larsen. It was only when I played it that I immediately remembered that I had already adopted the same variation as Black against Ivkov at Bled, in 1961, when Gligorić was present. The Yugoslav naturally neutralised my whole set-up, and in a slightly superior position offered a draw.

Only the fourth game gave me a certain cause for optimism. I once again won the theoretical duel in the Nimzo-Indian Defence, and this time, with the slightly better game, I offered a draw 'from a position of strength'. For almost the first time in my life, the sober voice of reason suggested that for the moment it was not worth declining draws, but was better to get into form and attempt to decide the match in the 3rd, 4th, and should the opportunity arise, 5th 'White' games.

But nothing came of the 5th game, and many of the reporters in the Yugoslav press began to express their preference for Gligorić. They said that he had a point in hand, that he had three 'White' games to come against my two, and that he was fit and well prepared physically. However, I sensed that I was 'beginning to play', and felt that in the fifth game I had seen quite a lot at the board.

Gligorić, meanwhile, was in something of a dilemma. On the one hand he realised that it would be good to increase his advantage with a win, but on the other hand he began playing with an extra degree of caution, so as to maintain that which had already been achieved. This indecision only hindered him. At any rate,

in the sixth game he played inconsistently, making first a safe move, and then an active one. It is not impossible that Gligorić was disturbed by my playing an opening which I had never played before. Be that as it may, the score in the match was levelled, and besides, I had noticed earlier that Gligorić before a defeat, and Gligorić after one are two entirely different players.

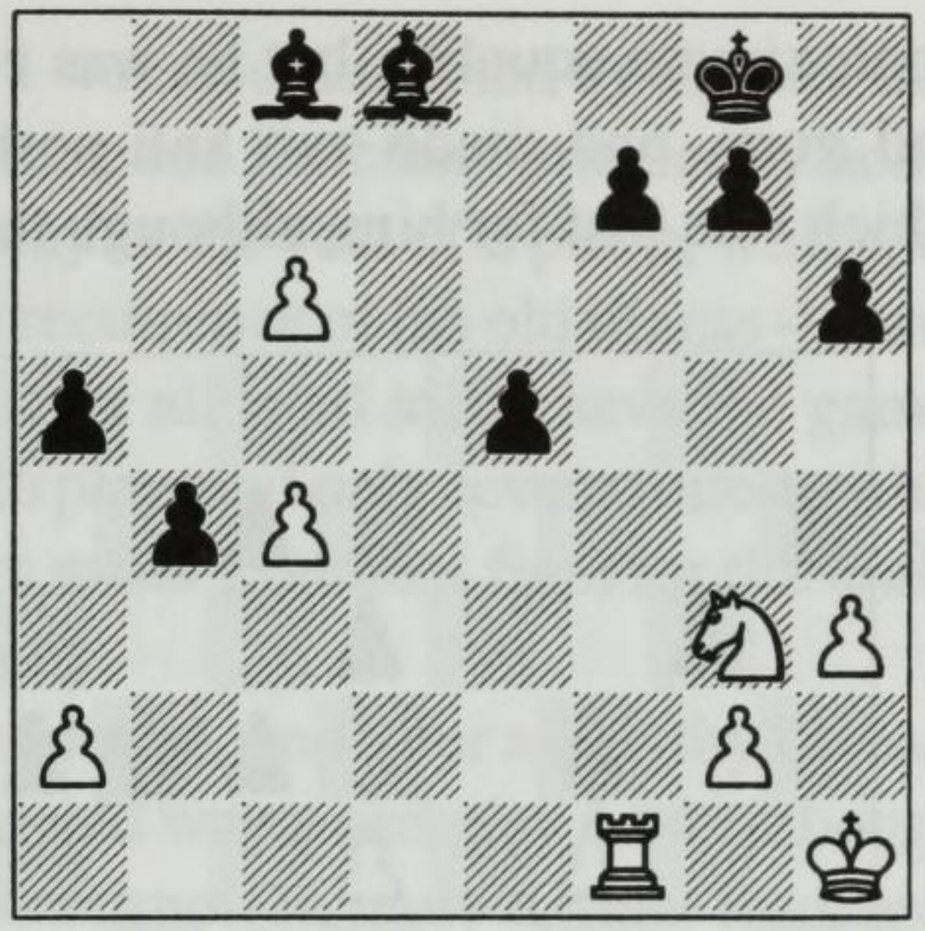
This was also confirmed in our match. In the seventh game I held the initiative, and managed to take the lead, so that both the score, and the mood of the opponents, had changed in my favour.

Gligorić had two 'White' games remaining, and here my sense of danger came into operation, though when it arose in me I do not know. In the eighth game I decided to avoid repeating the variation with which I had twice been successful. With what was I to replace it? I decided to 'borrow' from Larsen, who at that time was playing his match with Portisch in Zagreb, (incidentally, late every evening we would watch on television both a commentary on my game with Gligorić, and a description of the game between the Dane and the Hungarian) and chose the variation which he was adopting in the Nimzo-Indian Defence.

The decision proved to be a correct one, since later Gligorić told me that it was before the 8th game that he and Velimirović had found an important improvement, which effectively put out of business the variation which I had played in the 2nd and 4th games. The fact that I myself diverged noticeably distressed the Yugoslav Grandmaster. I quickly obtained at least an equal game, but despite having the better prospects, offered a draw, since I very much wanted to be in time to watch the televising of the football match between the USSR and Hungary. Gligorić thought for some 25-30 minutes, until midway through the first half, and declined. I felt just a little bit angry, but even so, when within 5 or 6 moves Gligorić in turn offered a draw, I did not try to gain revenge for the missed football: besides, I sensed that Svetozar had already cracked.

Indeed, the following game, the 9th, turned out to be the last. In it I adopted the move order chosen by Korchnoi in the 2nd game of his match with Reshevsky, which was proceeding at the same time in Amsterdam. I did not, of course, expect Gligorić to blunder away a pawn, as Reshevsky had done, but this almost happened. True, at the last moment Gligorić realised the danger, but he was able to ward it off only at the cost of two tempi. They proved sufficient for the game to be adjourned in a position which, although complicated, saw White the exchange ahead (*see diagram on next page*):

A lively and highly significant part in the analysis of the adjourned position was played by the world-famous violinist David Oistrakh, an old and faithful lover of chess, who had arrived in Yugoslavia for a concert. Incidentally, the analysis was quite complicated, and we analysed the position roughly 18 moves




**Tal – Gligorić**
*Candidates Match (9), Belgrade 1968*

ahead, avoiding a number of false paths. It was the main variation of our analysis that occurred in the game.

**43 ♖d1 ♗c7 44 ♘e4 ♔f8 45 ♘d6 ♗xd6 46 ♖xd6 ♔e7 47 ♖d5 a4 48 c7 b3 49 axb3 axb3 50 ♖xe5+ ♔d6 51 ♖b5 ♔xc7 52 ♖xb3 ♔c6 53 c5! ♗e6 54 ♖c3 ♗d5 55 ♔g1 f5 56 ♖a3! ♔b7 57 ♖g3 g5 58 ♖e3 ♔c6 59 ♖e7 ♔xc5 60 ♖h7 g4 61 hxg4 fxg4 62 ♖xh6 ♗b7 63 ♖g6 1-0**

The resumption therefore proceeded at practically lightning speed. The match concluded and I set off to visit Petar Smederavac, my son's godfather. Just on my arrival in Yugoslavia, a daughter had been born to him, and I became her godfather. Petar gave the baby the name of Talija.

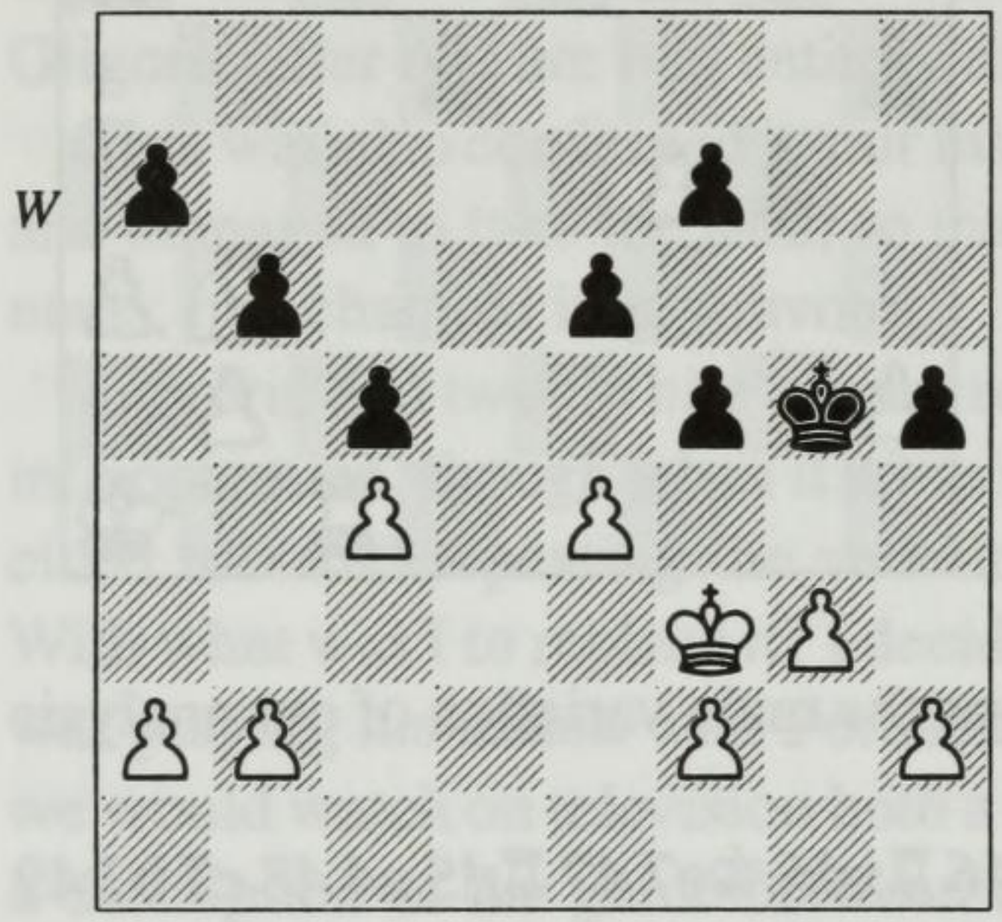
I returned to Moscow, and exactly half an hour later Victor Korchnoi, who was to be my opponent in the Candidates Semi-final Match, flew in from Amsterdam, where he had beaten Reshevsky.

In our match, the Leningrad Grandmaster was considered by chess correspondents to be the undisputed favourite. The score of our previous encounters appeared in the press, and it was recalled that, in the last tournament where we had both participated (Wijk aan Zee), Korchnoi had finished 3 points ahead of me. I was confronted by the following problems: firstly, to make myself forget about our previous games, and secondly, to force myself to play as reservedly as possible, since Korchnoi is at his most dangerous in positions of a counter-attacking type, and feels less confident in situations where he himself has to take the initiative.

Therefore we decided at the start of the match to give preference to 1 d4, since previously I had always opened with my king's pawn against him.

The very first game fully confirmed all our expectations. I began extra-calmly, then came simplification, and straight from the opening the game went into an ending which I could not have lost if I had tried. Korchnoi could have gained

approximate equality, but he was completely discouraged by the way the game had gone, and made two anti-positional moves. A pawn ending was reached which was lost for him, although this still had to be proved.



**Tal – Korchnoi**
*Candidates Match (1), Moscow 1968*

Here I wrongly made the mistake of not believing myself. At first I wrote down the winning move 28 e5, but then decided to work out all the variations literally to mate. To do this proved not at all easy. It was only several days later that a detailed analysis appeared, confirming that, by avoiding many false paths, White could win by force. Being unable to find all this at the board, I rejected 28 e5, subsequently again played inaccurately, and Korchnoi found the only moves to force a draw.

The most amusing thing is that I was not at all upset: the game had shown that the match tactics we had planned were quite correct.

In the second game I again avoided all the sharp continuations into which my opponent tried to provoke me, and in the third game once again chose the quiet opening variation which had been psychologically so unpleasant for Korchnoi in the first game. Here, and this doesn't happen often, my opponent fell into a prepared opening trap, and I obtained a completely won position with an extra pawn. I allowed myself to relax a little, which you can't afford to do against Korchnoi, and first made my task more complicated, and then in time-trouble lost all my advantage.

I realised that there was no cause for panic, and that this game would have played on Korchnoi's nerves no less than on mine, but my heart began to be tormented by doubts: one game I had not won, now a second. I was already somewhat softened up when I arrived for the next game.

Korchnoi very keenly sensed this, played the first part of the game very energetically, adopting an interesting theoretical innovation and obtained a clearly

superior, if not winning position. In addition, I was also dispirited by the fact that over the first 15 moves I had spent a mass of time, and Korchnoi practically none.

To avoid the worst I decided to get some play at the cost of a pawn, which, of course, Korchnoi should not have taken, but a recurrence of his old illness – a tendency to capture pawns of 'any quality' – almost allowed me to save the game. For the pawn Black's pieces came strongly into play, and only severe time-trouble 'led' me past a continuation which would have made Korchnoi fight for the draw. However, I blundered, lost a piece and the game.

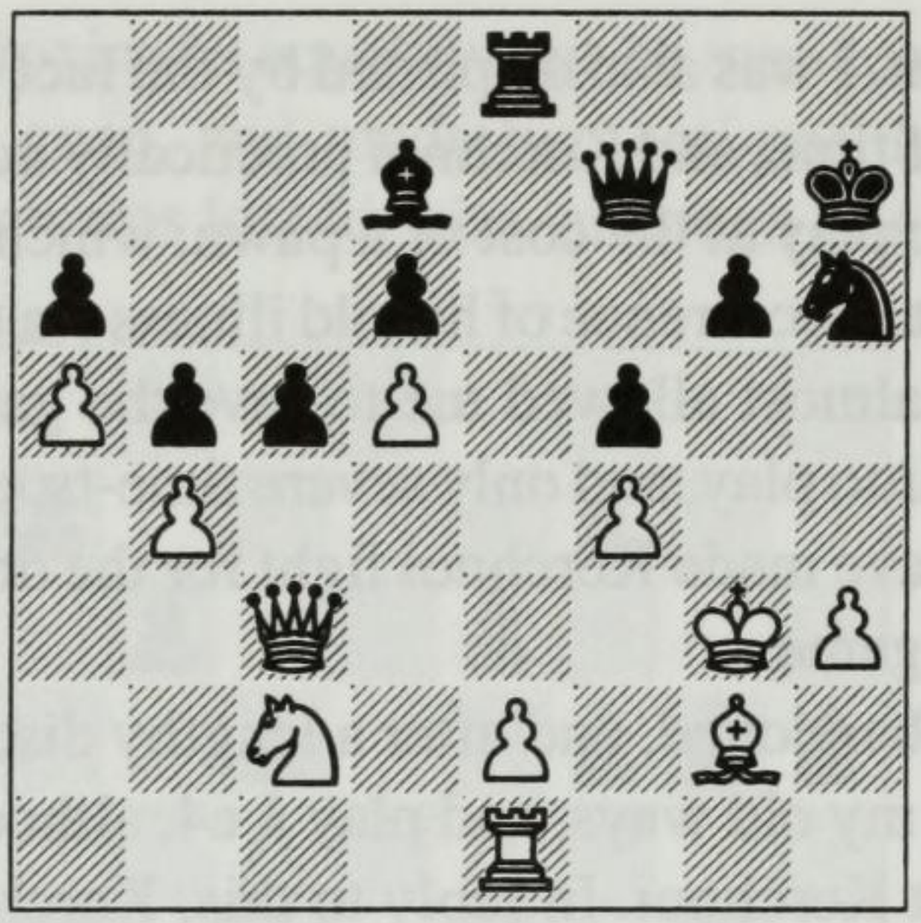
My good intentions were immediately abandoned, and after a lengthy discussion with my second, I decided to return to my old ways, and play 1 e4, although it had previously been unsuccessful against Korchnoi. In reply to this, Korchnoi chose a quiet variation of the Ruy Lopez, which he had played only rarely, promising White an active and superior game. I did not play the best way, and Korchnoi practically equalised. Of course, if I had not been burdened by the thought of my loss in the fourth game, and the chances missed earlier, I would have gone in for the quiet position planned by Black, but my nervous decision, taken on the spot, gave Korchnoi the chance to shine with a typical counter-attack.

Everything seemed to be settled. By tradition, the match against Korchnoi was lost, for I would never make up the difference of two points in the remaining five games, in three of which I would have Black, and I went along quite calmly to the sixth game. Korchnoi evidently considered even three draws to be a luxury for me, and went all out to 'finish me off'. Indeed, he obtained the better position, while I was once again in time-trouble, and took my only chance: to sacrifice the exchange for a pawn. The position became considerably sharper, but Korchnoi was evidently unprepared for such a change, and when the time control had been reached it was clear that, despite being the exchange ahead, White was lost.

The fate of the match once more hung in the balance, and Korchnoi's self-confidence was markedly shaken. In the last games of the match he tended, uncharacteristically, to aim only for a draw. It became easier for me to play in such a situation, but not once was I able to realise any advantage I gained.

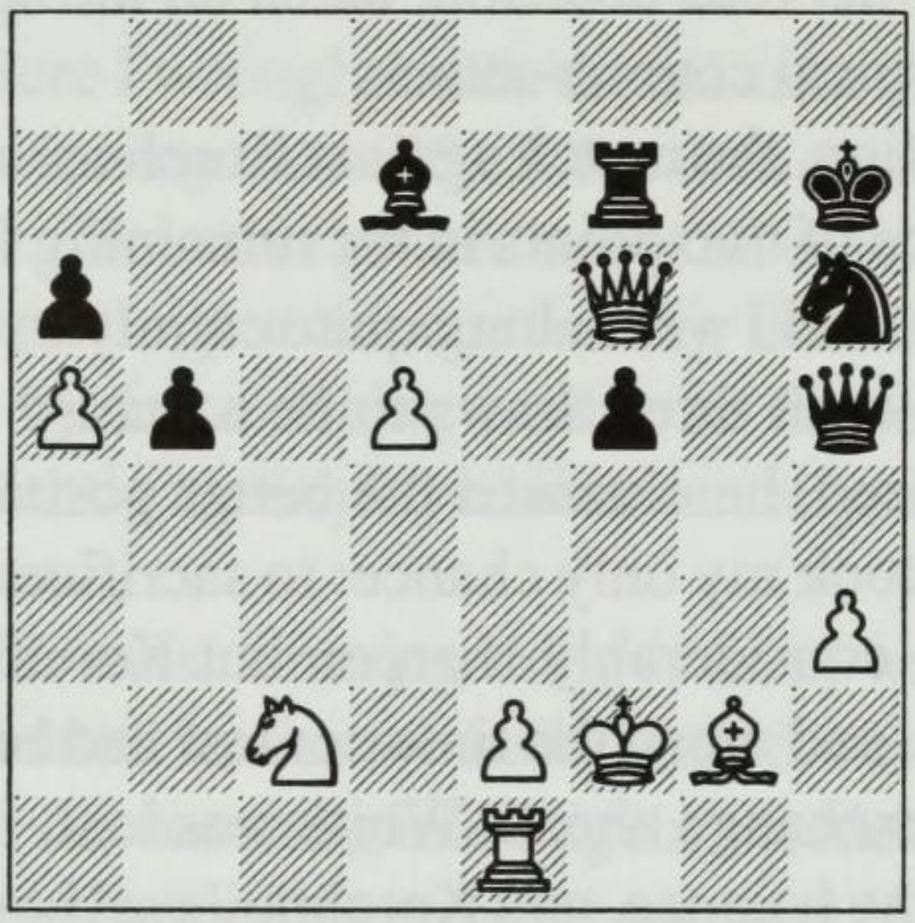
I began the 10th game very calmly. A loss and a draw were equally worthless to me, but there could be no question of any unjustified risk. In the first half of the game Korchnoi played unsurely; in a Dutch Defence I seized the initiative, and gained a winning position (*see diagram on following page*).

But here nerves came into the act. After all, in the event of a win, the psychological wind would be in my favour, and a sudden-death play-off would disturb Korchnoi's equilibrium. Instead of 32...♕g7 or 32...♕f8, followed by the knight manoeuvre ...♘g8-f6-e4, I sacrificed a pawn for an attack: **32...g5 33 fxg5**



**Korchnoi – Tal**
*Candidates Match (10), Moscow 1968*

**♖g8 34 ♔f2 ♖xg5 35 bxc5 dxc5 36 ♕xc5 ♕h5 37 ♕e7+ ♖g7 38 ♕f6 ♖g6 39 ♕e7+ ♖g7 40 ♕f6 ♖f7** *(D)* Here the game was adjourned in the following very sharp position.



Korchnoi thought for a very long time, and when we arrived for the resumption, it turned out that he had sealed a move which we had not analysed at all: **41 ♕c3** (41 ♕d4 was better). At the board I failed to find a very promising pawn sacrifice, whereupon Black's attack gradually died out, and before the second time control I was forced to agree to a repetition of moves.

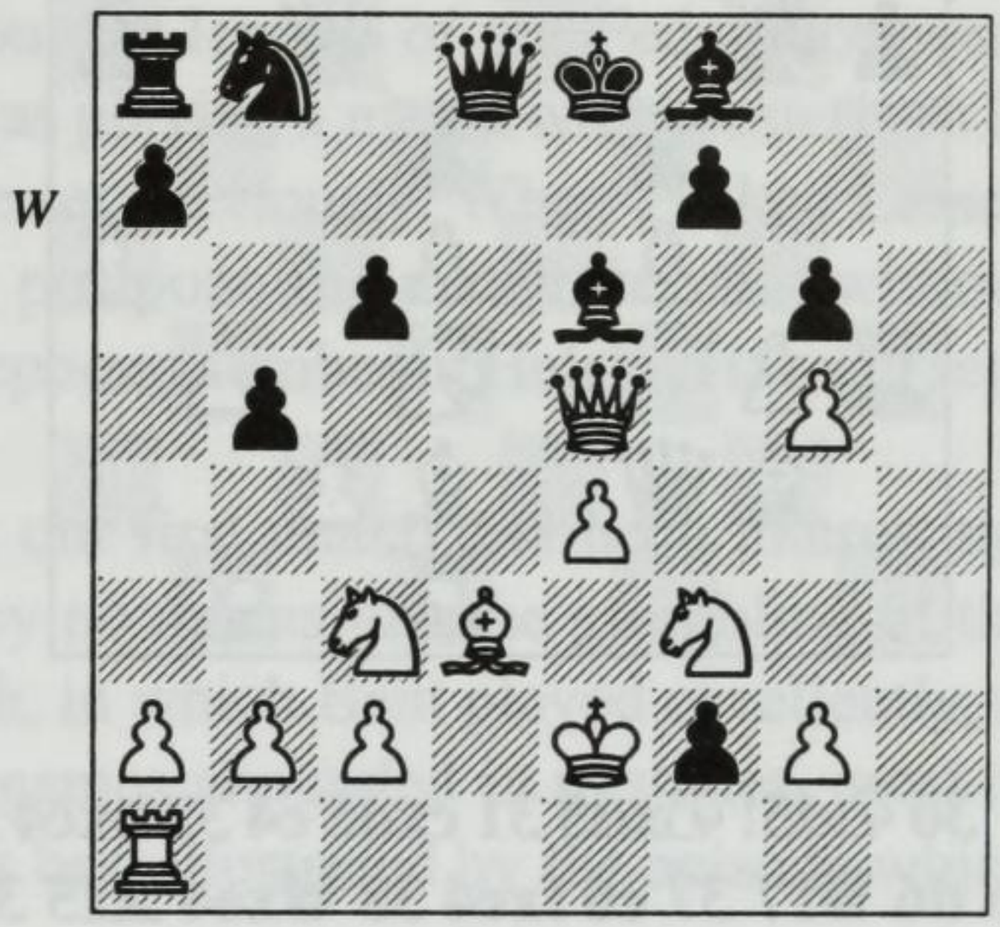
It was then that our little incident took place on the pages of the press, when Korchnoi in his interview declared me to be 'a highly routine player'. On the pages of the weekly *64*, only just revived, the editor, Petrosian, spoke up for me, and I thus became the object of a creative discussion.

JOURNALIST. *But how did you yourself react to Korchnoi's declaration?*

CHESS PLAYER. I didn't. I knew Victor, and I knew that he was capable of saying what he did not mean. However, I found it amusing how he expressed his dissatisfaction, when a couple of months later I turned up as correspondent for *64* at his Final Candidates Match with Spassky. Evidently he assumed that, exploiting my official position, I would try to get even with him.

Then I found out that a place had not been found for me in the Soviet Olympiad team for Lugano, and I went off to a small tournament in the Georgian town of Gori. Particular interest was given to the event by the participation of the Lady World Champion Nona Gaprindashvili.

After beginning the tournament with my usual defeat, I then won several games, including the following interesting encounter.



**Tal – Gufeld**
*Gori, 1968*

**20 ♘xb5! cxb5 21 ♗xb5+ ♘d7 22 ♖d1 ♕e7** 22...♗e7 was the best defence, when White has apparently nothing better than to transpose into a level ending: 23 ♕h8+ ♗f8 24 ♘e5 ♕xg5 25 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 26 ♘xd7 ♕g5+ 27 ♔xf2 ♕xd1 28 ♕xf8+ ♔xd7 29 ♕xa8. **23 ♖xd7! ♗xd7 24 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 25 ♕d5+ ♔c7 26 ♕xa8 ♕c5 27 c3,** and White's pawn advantage decided the game.

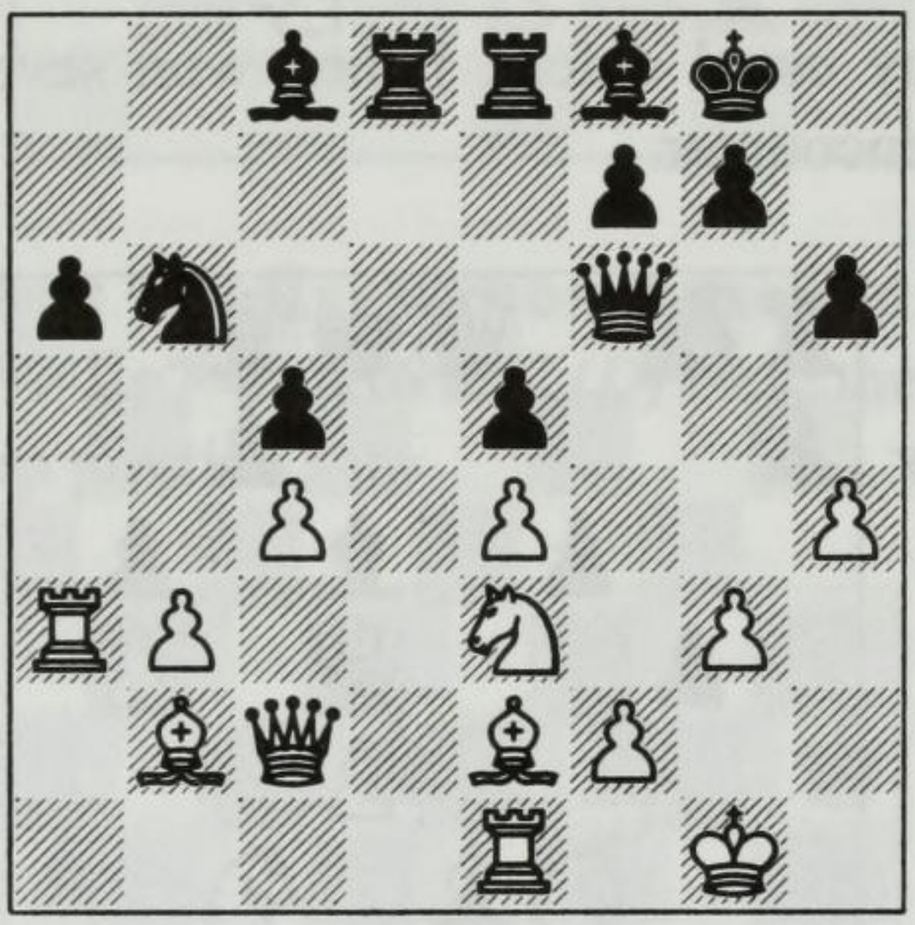
I started the last round as the leader, and drew my final game with Gaprindashvili, which suited us both but made Gufeld most unhappy, since as a result Nona finished up level with him.

The year concluded with the Team Championship of the Country in Riga, and with it began a chess year (not coinciding with the calendar year) which I would very much like to cross out from my autobiography. It brought me only failures, and failures that hurt very deeply.

In the first round of the Team Championship I declined a draw offered by the master I. Zaitsev, adjourned the game in an inferior position, then reached a

drawn position, but blundered badly on the last move before the second time control. In the second round I went down with a crash to Bronstein, and although I then came up to '+1' (one of the games, with Khermlin, is given here), my result could not be called anything but mediocre.

Straight away, just before the New Year, I set off to Alma-Ata for the Championship of the Soviet Union. True, New Year's Eve itself was pleasant enough, since on 30th December I had my revenge against the same I. Zaitsev, winning a fairly good game.




**Tal – Zaitsev**
*USSR Ch, Alma Ata 1968*

**30 ♘d5! ♘xd5 31 cxd5 c4 32 bxc4 ♗xa3 33 ♗xa3 ♔h8 34 c5 ♕e7 35 ♖d1 f5 36 d6 ♕f7 37 c6 fxe4 38 ♕xe4 ♗f5 39 ♕e3 ♗c8 40 ♗c5 ♕e6 41 ♗h5 ♖g8 42 d7 ♗xd7 43 ♖d6 ♕f5 44 ♗g6 ♕g4 45 ♗b6 ♗e8 46 ♖xd8 ♗xg6 47 c7 ♗f5 48 ♕b3 ♗e6 49 c8♕ 1-0**

After six rounds I was up amongst the leaders, but then came two most annoying defeats in a row against Platonov, who had started badly, and my compatriot Klovans.

I naturally fell out of the leading group, and then began my second ascent. Several games went successfully, including the one with Gurgenidze given in the book, and some six rounds before the finish the distance between myself and the leaders had been reduced to a minimum. Taking into account the fact that I had a not especially difficult finish, there was even hope for complete success.

Just at this point came a recurrence of my illness, which had not left me, apart from short intervals, for the whole of 1968. The consequence was that, for the first time in my life, I scored only 1½ points out of 5 at the finish, and it should have been even less.

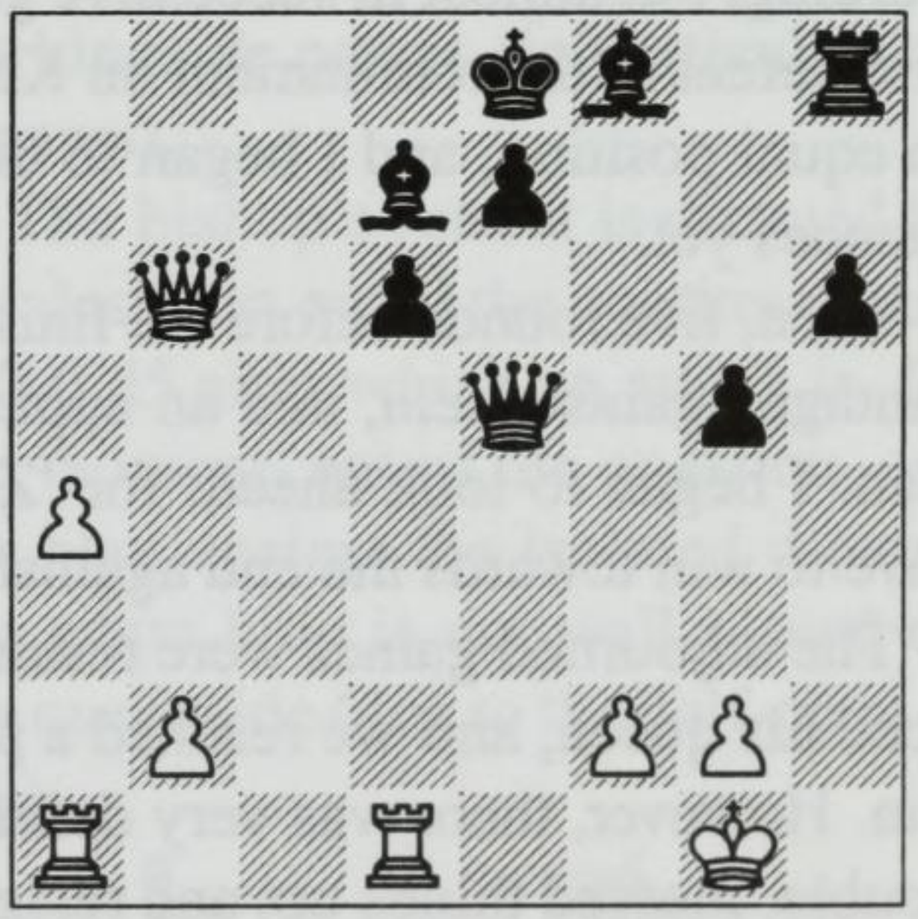
The result was my worst failure up till then in the Championship of my country.

In addition, I had no suspicion of what was awaiting me in the following Zonal Championship that same year.

After the Championship I had once again to return to matches, and to meet Bent Larsen, who had lost in the other Candidates semi-final Match. The winner of our 'consolation' duel would have the right to compete in the next Interzonal Tournament.

At that point I felt so terrible that, for the first time in my life, I appealed to the Soviet Chess Federation with a request that the match be postponed. Our chess leaders reacted to this suggestion extremely reservedly. It was in their interests that the match with Larsen should be concluded before the start of the USSR Championship semi-finals, since in the event of my losing, I would have to start the new cycle for the crown in one of these semi-finals. Formally, I was assured that everything possible would be done, but the leaders of our Federation were 'unable' to find Larsen, who at that time was playing a match with Westerinen in Helsinki, and the match began on the date set previously. When I asked Larsen whether he would have been prepared to postpone the match, he said without thinking: 'Of course! My wife gave my telephone number in Helsinki to your representative, but no one phoned me ...'

This match with Larsen was as bad as our first match had been interesting. Larsen is of the same opinion, so this is by no means just the grumbling of the loser. Of all the eight games, only the sixth, in which Bent played excellently, is worth singling out. The remainder of the games abounded in mistakes, most of them by me. My poor form in the match is best illustrated by the episode which occurred in the 8th game.




**Tal – Larsen**
*Candidates 3rd place play-off, Eersel 1969*

This position was reached after the black king had 'taken a walk', and then returned to e8. I had calculated that by advancing my a-pawn, I would win in a few

moves, but suddenly I saw that by castling (!!) Black could set up a counter-attack on f2. I therefore began taking energetic measures to prevent Black from castling...

After the game, which I lost, one of the participants in a mass tournament taking place there came up to me, and asked why I hadn't played 29 a5 at the appropriate moment. I replied, and then stopped short on seeing the glazed eyes of Larsen and the enquiring fan. Only then did I realise that I had been fighting not against castling, but against its shadow, and I thought to myself. 'It is just as well that this was only a prestige game; if it had decided the match, I would have been near to having a heart attack...'

Then there came a month's break in my chess biography, given over to medication. Lying in a Riga hospital I appeared in the role of chess correspondent on the Petrosian-Spassky match; I received the games move by move by telephone from Moscow, and the following morning I dictated my notes on the games to the Moscow stenographer of the chess weekly *64*. I was then taken to Moscow, and the day for the operation was named. Then I found out that for six to eight weeks after it I would be confined to bed. Meanwhile the Championship of the Soviet Union would have started, this year having the status of a Zonal Tournament, and I decided to put off the operation until later. Nevertheless, in my condition it proved quite impossible to play, and my colleagues tried many times to persuade me to leave the tournament, but with my former optimism I completed it all the same. Although in the lower half of the table most of the time, in the middle of the tournament I somehow ran into form. I don't know if it was that my opponents began to under-estimate me, or that my organism suddenly became accustomed to working, but almost in successive games I won against Lutikov, and inflicted the first defeat in the tournament on Kholmov. In addition, Vasiukov lost on time in an equal position, and I began to think: who knows, if I finish well, I may have chances yet.

Then, five rounds before the finish, I had two adjourned games; with a big advantage against Stein, and an apparently completely won position against Furman. I began to look ahead: for 'Zonal' success, besides these games, I would have to win towards the end against Gipslis and Averkin.

The adjourned games were resumed. Furman found an interesting idea, sacrificed his queen, and we reached a position where there was perhaps no longer a win. However, there was very definitely no need for me to lose! I got into time-trouble, messed things up, and resigned, and then with a complete lack of enthusiasm resumed my game against Stein, finally drawing with difficulty.

My overall score was quite deplorable: for the first time since Curaçao I scored less than fifty per cent.

Game 68

**Tal – Bolbochan**

*Havana Olympiad, 1966*

Sicilian Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **c5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **♘c6** |
| **3** | **d4** | **cxd4** |
| **4** | **♘xd4** | **e6** |
| **5** | **♘c3** | **d6** |

The Argentinean master chooses the system of play which has been perhaps the most popular in recent events, the Scheveningen Variation. However, his move-order is slightly unusual: in this situation (a) one of the most active replies to the normal Scheveningen (1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e6) 6 g4!, would, in this position, be a blow in thin air, and (b) in the normal variation 6 ♗e2 ♘f6 7 ♗e3 ♗e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 f4, Black can manage perfectly well without the move ...a6, by continuing 9...♗d7 10 ♕e1 ♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 ♗c6. By adopting this variation, Korchnoi, Larsen, Polugaevsky and Portisch have achieved excellent results as Black against 1 e4.

Attempts to improve White's attacking potential led to the creation of the sharp plan 6 ♗e3 ♘f6 7 f4 ♗e7 8 ♕f3 0-0 9 0-0-0. Indeed, in a series of games White obtained an irresistible attack. However, in his game with Gufeld from the 33rd USSR Championship, Furman found a very important improvement: 8...e5! 9 fxe5 dxe5 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 ♗c4 0-0 12 0-0 (this position was considered to be favourable for White) 12...♘g4! 13 ♖ad1 ♘xe3. It should, incidentally, be mentioned that the move 8...e5 has been taken up by the Argentinean team. Although White's play can probably be improved (in particular, in this last variation 12 h3 merits attention instead of 12 0-0), even so Black's position appears perfectly satisfactory.

In the present game I decided to choose a sharp variation which, following the example of the Yugoslav players Matulović and Velimirović (to whom the author's patent belongs is as yet unknown), has become the latest word in fashion[1].

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **6** | **♗e3** | **♘f6** |
| **7** | **♗c4** | **♗e7** |
| **8** | **♕e2** | **0-0** |
| **9** | **♗b3** | |

White unequivocally declares his intentions – to castle long and advance his kingside pawns (in particular, his g-pawn).

The bishop's retreat is dictated by the desire to avoid the continuation 9 0-0-0 d5 after which an attack is, for the moment, out of the question, and for play against the isolated d-pawn the white king is not well placed on the queenside (due to the half-open c-file).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **9** | **...** | **a6** |
| **10** | **0-0-0** | **♕a5** *(D)* |

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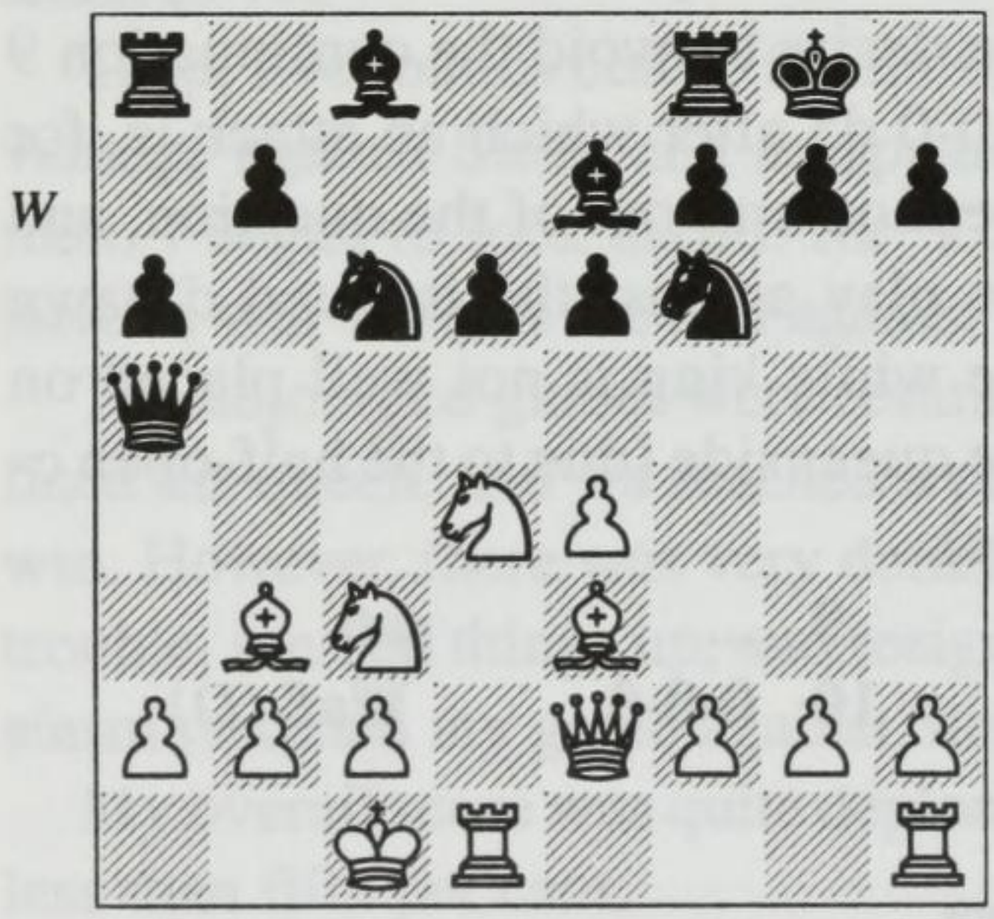
1 The 'patent' is Velimirović's. – *Editor's note.*

A new and, it would appear, by no means bad continuation. Usually Black has played 10...♕c7 here, after which, along with Matulović's variation 11 ♖hg1 b5 12 g4 b4 13 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 14 ♘d5!, the immediate 11 g4 is also possible, as occurred in the game Kavalek-Polugaevsky, which was played a few days earlier. Polugaevsky continued indifferently: 11...b5 12 g5 ♘xd4 13 ♗xd4 ♘d7 14 ♕h5 ♘c5 and after 15 ♖hg1! came under an irresistible attack (16 ♕h6!! is threatened). Also, 11...♘xd4 12 ♖xd4 e5 13 ♖c4! does not relieve Black of his difficulties, since the rook is situated conveniently enough on c4, being able to sacrifice itself for Black's queen's bishop, after which White's attack develops very easily. For example: 13...♕d8 14 g5 ♘e8 15 ♖xc8! ♖xc8 16 h4 ♘c7 17 ♕g4 when h5 is unavoidable.

With the black queen on a5, 11 g4 can hardly be good for White, since after 11...♘xd4 12 ♖xd4 e5 13 ♖a4 ♕d8 14 g5 ♘e8 the position of the rook on a4 is rather absurd.



**11 ♔b1**

I didn't want to play immediately 11 ♖hg1 (which was probably the strongest move). The point was that in the variation 11...♘xd4 12 ♗xd4 b5 the most active plan appears to be the one involving the advance e5, for which the king's rook is best placed on e1. In order to find out his opponent's intentions, White for the time being simply makes a useful waiting move.

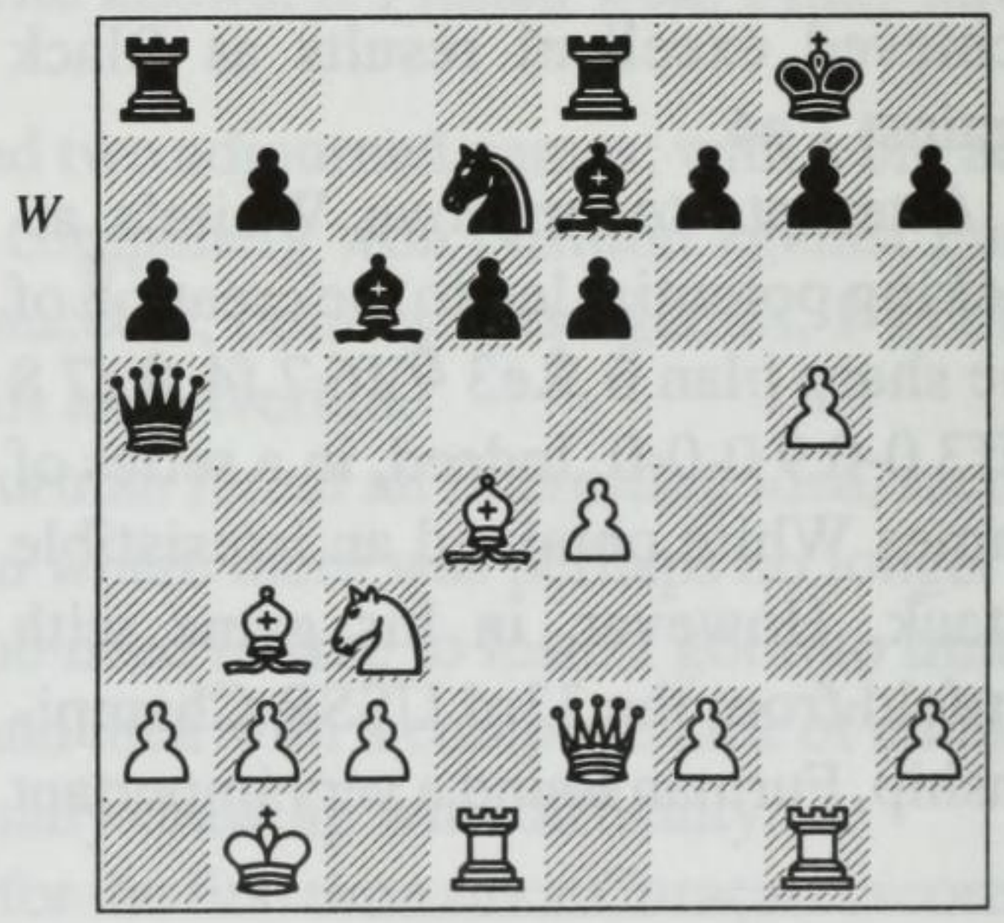
**11 ... ♖e8**

Without doubt a poor reply. The virtues of this move (the possibility of moving the knight or bishop to f8) are most unclear, whereas the drawbacks (in particular, the weakening of the f7-square) become apparent almost immediately.

**12 ♖hg1 ♗d7**

Here 12...♘xd4 13 ♗xd4 b5 is bad in view of 14 g4 b4 15 g5 ♘d7 16 ♘d5!

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **13** | **g4** | **♘xd4** |
| **14** | **♗xd4** | **♗c6** |
| **15** | **g5** | **♘d7** *(D)* |



**16 ♖d3**

Here White was faced with the question: how to build up the attack? After 16 ♕h5 g6 17 ♕h6 ♗f8 18 ♕h4 ♘e5 19 ♖g3 I did not like the fact that Black could gain time by ...h5. The immediate advance of the h-pawn appeared promising, but I was loath to give up the idea of a piece attack on h7. Now Black's reply is forced, since 17 ♕h5 is threatened, after which 17...g6 fails to 18 ♕xh7+!, while, besides 18 ♖h3, the threat of 18 ♖f3 is highly unpleasant.

**16 ... g6**
**17 h4 ♘c5**
**18 h5! ♘xb3**

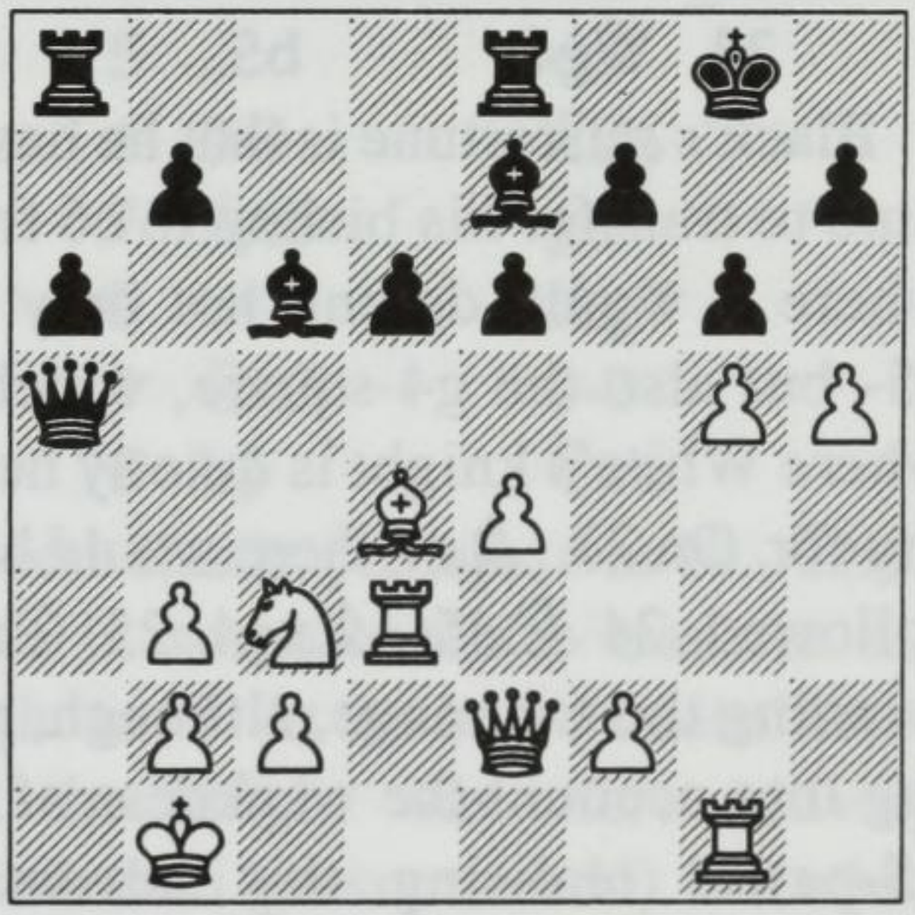
It is interesting that Black rejected the capture of the rook after thinking for literally two minutes. After the game Bolbochan said that he considered the position after 18...♘xd3 19 ♕xd3 to be hopeless for Black. The attack certainly appears very dangerous, but it is not so simple to find a forced win after 19...♗xg5. During the game, keeping the move 19 cxd3 in reserve, I very much wanted to play 19 hxg6!, after which some highly interesting variations could occur. Clearly bad is 19...♘e5 20 gxf7+ ♘xf7 21 g6, or 20...♔xf7 21 ♕h5+. On 19...hxg6 there could follow 20 ♖h1 ♘e5 (20...e5 21 ♕f3!) 21 f4 ♔g7 22 fxe5 dxe5 23 ♕h2! White's task is hardest after 19...♘f4. Nothing is gained, for example, by 20 gxh7+ ♔xh7 21 ♖h1+ ♔g6 22 ♖h6+ ♔xg5 (to be honest, I should admit that here also there was a reserve variation: 21 ♕g4 ♕xg5 22 ♕d1, winning the queen for two rooks and maintaining an attacking position[1]).

However, it appears that White can do better by playing 20 gxf7+! ♔xf7 21 ♗xe6+!!, after which both 21...♔xe6 22 ♕g4+ ♔f7 23 ♕xf4+ ♔g8 24 g6! and 21...♘xe6 22 ♕f3+ ♔g6 (otherwise 23 g6) 23 ♘d5! ♘xd4 24 ♘xe7+ lead to mate. The reserve variation was prepared in case Black could play 21...♔f8, after which I could not see a clear win, though at the same time I did not believe that such a compromised position could be defended.

**19 axb3** *(D)*

White again offers the sacrifice of the exchange. On 19 cxb3 ♗b5! his attack would be significantly slowed down.

*B*



**19 ... e5**

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1 After 22...♕h6 23 ♖h1 ♗h4, I do not see how White wins the queen.

After 19...♗b5 20 hxg6 bad for Black are both 20...hxg6 21 ♖h3 e5 22 ♕g4 and 20...fxg6 21 ♕g4 ♗xd3 22 ♕xe6+ ♔f8 23 cxd3 (weaker is 23 ♖g3 ♗xe4 24 ♘xe4 ♕e1+, with a draw).

**20 ♗e3 ♕c7!**

Here also 20...♗b5 would be extremely hazardous: 21 hxg6 hxg6 22 ♕g4 ♗xd3 23 cxd3 ♗f8 24 ♘d5 ♗g7 25 ♖h1 or 21...fxg6 22 ♕g4 ♗xd3 23 ♕h4! (not 23 cxd3 ♔g7) 23...♗f8 24 cxd3 followed by 25 ♘d5[1].

Now White is forced to slow the tempo of the attack while preparing a favourable regrouping of his forces. Against any immediate offensive Black succeeds in guarding the Achilles' heel of his position: the h7-square.

**21 ♗d2 ♖ad8**

**22 ♖h1**

The rook on d3 must keep control of the d5-square.

**22 ... ♗f8**

**23 ♕g4 b5**

Black's misfortune is that he has no time to transfer his bishop to e6 from where it would defend not only the d5- but also the g4-square, which is where White's knight is quietly heading for. On 23...♗d7 there would have followed 24 ♘d5! ♗xg4 25 ♘xc7 winning the exchange, although, taking into account the weakness of the g5-pawn, realising this advantage would involve certain difficulties.

**24 ♕h4!**

The preparations are complete.

**24 ... b4**

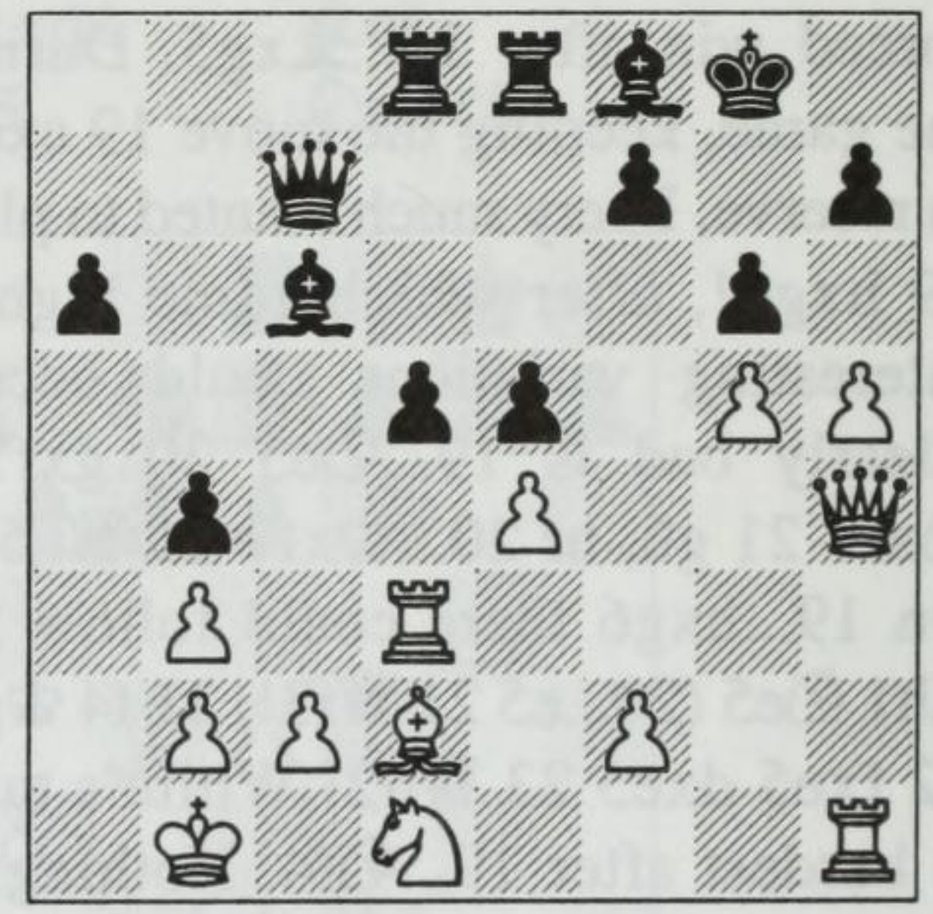
Black apparently has no suspicion of the impending danger. However, there is no other useful move. 24...♕b7 could be answered by 25 f3 since at the moment White does not require the rook on d3 for his immediate attack.

**25 ♘d1!**

Of course, White also keeps a significant advantage after 25 ♘d5 ♗xd5 26 ♖xd5 but the move in the game is more decisive.

**25 ... d5** *(D)*

At last Black succeeds in effecting this thematic advance, which in many Sicilian encounters serves as a cure for all ills. Here, however, this is not so. As the further course of the game shows, 25...♕b7 26 f3 d5 was a little more precise, though even this would not have saved Black from defeat.

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1 This line just seems to lose a rook after 23...♗b5 24 ♖h1 h5, and is presumably a misprint, although the intention is hard to discern.

**26 ♘e3 dxe4**
**27 ♘g4! f5**

Mate follows after 27...exd3 28 ♘f6+ ♔h8 29 hxg6 h6 30 g7+! (I very much wanted to sacrifice my queen by 30 ♕xh6+ ♗xh6 31 ♖xh6+ ♔g7 32 ♘h5+ but unfortunately this leads only to a draw after 32...♔g8 and 33 g7 f6 34 g6 fails to 34...♕xg7!) 30...♗xg7 31 gxh6 ♗f8 32 ♕g5 or 31...♗xh1 32 hxg7+ ♔xg7 33 ♕h6 mate.

**28 ♘f6+ ♔f7**
**29 hxg6+ ♔e6**

On 29...hxg6, 30 ♕h7+ ♗g7 31 ♕xg7+! is crushing. This is why the black queen would have been better placed on b7. In this case White could have continued with the modest 31 ♖h6. Now the rest is simple.

**30 ♘xe8 ♖xe8**
**31 gxh7 ♗g7**
**32 ♖dh3 ♗d5**
**33 ♕h5 ♔d7**
**34 ♕xe8+! 1-0**

Game 69

**Kristiansen – Tal**

*Havana Olympiad 1966*

Sicilian Defence

**1 e4 c5**
**2 ♘f3 e6**
**3 d4 cxd4**
**4 ♘xd4 a6**
**5 ♗d3**

This move enjoyed considerable popularity at the Olympiad, and it must be said that with it White was definitely successful. In particular, the Spanish master Calvo literally crushed Korchnoi. As far as I know, following this Victor did not adopt the system with 2...e6 and 4...a6 again either in the later rounds of the Olympiad, or in the USSR Championship. A few months earlier Korchnoi had suffered a defeat at the hands of Matulović in this variation. In both of these games Black played 4...♗c5 5 ♘b3 ♗a7. After 4...♘c6 5 ♘xc6 (or 5 ♗e3) 5...bxc6 6 c4 (or 6 0-0) White also has a good game. In the present game Black tries to avoid well-known variations by choosing an unpretentious continuation, which, although it does not set White any serious opening problems, nevertheless has the advantage of being relatively novel. As the further course of the game shows, my opponent was a good tactician, but his opening erudition left something to be desired. For this reason I was quickly able to obtain a comfortable game.

**5 ... d6**
**6 0-0 ♘f6**
**7 ♗e3 g6**
**8 c4 ♗g7**
**9 ♘c3 0-0**
**10 h3 ♘c6**

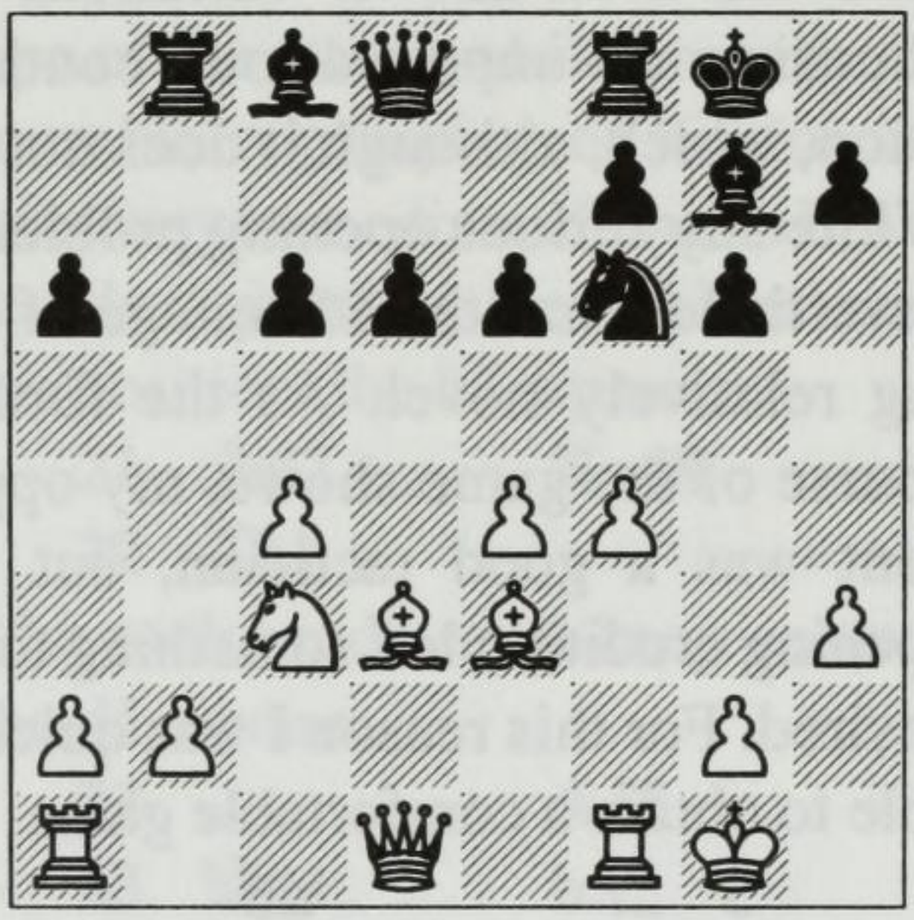
More elastic, perhaps, was 10...♘bd7 so as in some cases to transfer the knight to c5. At the board I considered that the knight was more actively placed on c6 (pressure on d4). But while my opponent was thinking about his next move, I noticed to my displeasure that in fact White is by no means forced to keep his light-squared bishop on d3

for ever. By continuing 11 ♗e2! he would obtain a position with a small, but significant advantage. However, there followed ...

**11 ♘xc6 bxc6**

... after which it can confidently be stated that Black's opening difficulties are behind him. His mobile pawn centre, the half-open b-file, and the activity of his fianchettoed bishop ensure that a possible kingside attack by White will not be dangerous.

**12 f4 ♖b8** *(D)*



**13 ♖f2 ♖e8**

This last move is perhaps not bad, but the fact is that Black combines it with a dubious plan. Here, and especially on the next move, ...c5 was in the spirit of the position, establishing control over d4, after which Black's position would definitely be preferable.

I wanted to carry out the advance ...d5, so as to exploit the position of White's knight and queen's bishop.

**14 ♕f3 d5**

In making this move, Black assessed his position very optimistically, since pawn exchanges in the centre are clearly unfavourable for White, while the continuation 15 e5 d4! 16 exf6 dxc3 even leads to material losses. However, Kristiansen's next move came as an unpleasant surprise to me.

**15 ♗a7**

Perhaps the immediate 15 ♗c5 was more accurate, so as on 15...♘d7 to gain a tempo by 16 ♗d6. The move in the game involves a sacrifice of the exchange.

**15 ... ♖b7**

**16 ♗c5 d4**

After almost an hour's consideration, I very unwillingly made this move. The point was that the continuation 16...♘d7 17 ♗d6 ♗d4 18 ♔h1 (or 18 ♘d1) did not appeal to me, since the white bishop on d6 seemed no less active than either of Black's rooks. Perhaps this is a somewhat subjective assessment. But what to do – I would be very happy to have the white pieces in the position arising in this variation. On the other hand, to sacrifice the exchange myself by 16...♕a5 17 b4 ♖xb4 also appeared unconvincing, since, in the first place, instead of 17 b4 White could simply play 17 ♗a3, and in the second place, even after the acceptance of the sacrifice and 19 ♖c1 Black's initiative seemed insufficiently concrete. Now Black begins a rather complicated plan, seeing before him somewhere in the distant future a genuinely promising

exchange sacrifice. In the end I was able to effect it, but only with the assistance of my opponent.

**17 ♘e2**

On 17 ♘a4 Black was intending to continue 17...e5 after which 18 f5 gxf5 is unfavourable for White. In this case the remoteness of the white knight from the kingside would tell.

**17 ... ♘d7**

The immediate 17...♖xb2 was inferior because of 18 e5 ♘d7 19 ♗xd4. After the text-move White cannot capture on d4: 18 ♗xd4? ♗xd4 19 ♘xd4 ♘c5 20 ♕e3 ♖d7, winning a piece.

**18 ♗d6**

During the game it was to this active continuation that I devoted the most attention. But perhaps White should have preferred the more conservative 18 ♗a3 holding on to the pawn. I was going to reply 18...♗f8.

**18 ... ♖xb2!**

Black not only captures a pawn, but also significantly activates his rook. This factor soon takes on decisive significance.

**19 c5 ♗f8**

Black cannot endure the bishop on d6 for long. If it were White to move, then after e5 he would have an overwhelming position. After the text, 20 e5 can be met by 20...♘xc5. Also unfavourable for White is 20 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 21 ♘xd4 ♘e5!

**20 ♖c1**

The only way to keep the initiative.

**20 ... ♗xd6**

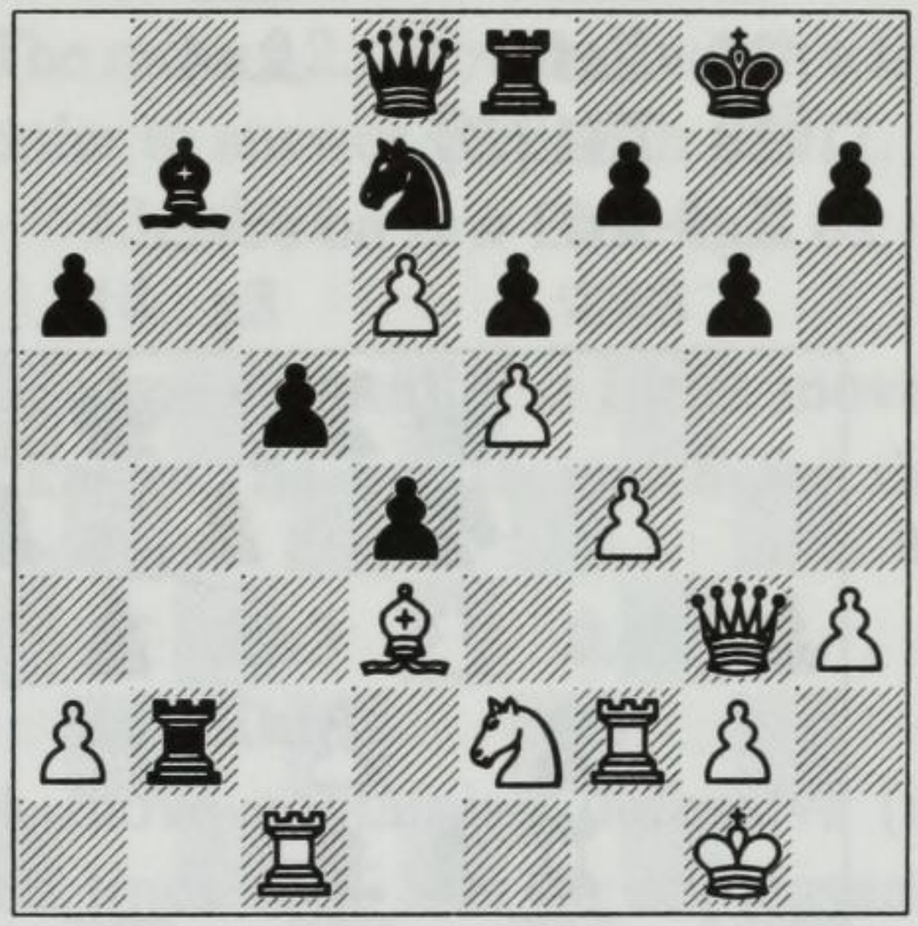
**21 cxd6 c5**

**22 ♕g3**

Black's task would perhaps have been more difficult after 22 ♘g3 exchanging off the active black rook straight away. It should be added that the outwardly active 22 e5 ♗b7 23 ♕g4 is met by the unpleasant rejoinder 23...f5!

**22 ... ♗b7**

**23 e5** *(D)*




White's idea is to carry out with great effect the advance f5. The opening of the f-file promises White a dangerous initiative. However, Black has at his disposal a means of parrying all the threats.

**23 ... ♖xa2!**

The note to Black's 18th move applies to an even greater degree to the capture of the a-pawn. The essence of the position is that Black must, at any price, liquidate his opponent's potentially most active piece – his bishop. Black's last move is made first of all with this in mind. Now (for instance, in reply to 24 f5) the threat of 24...♖a3

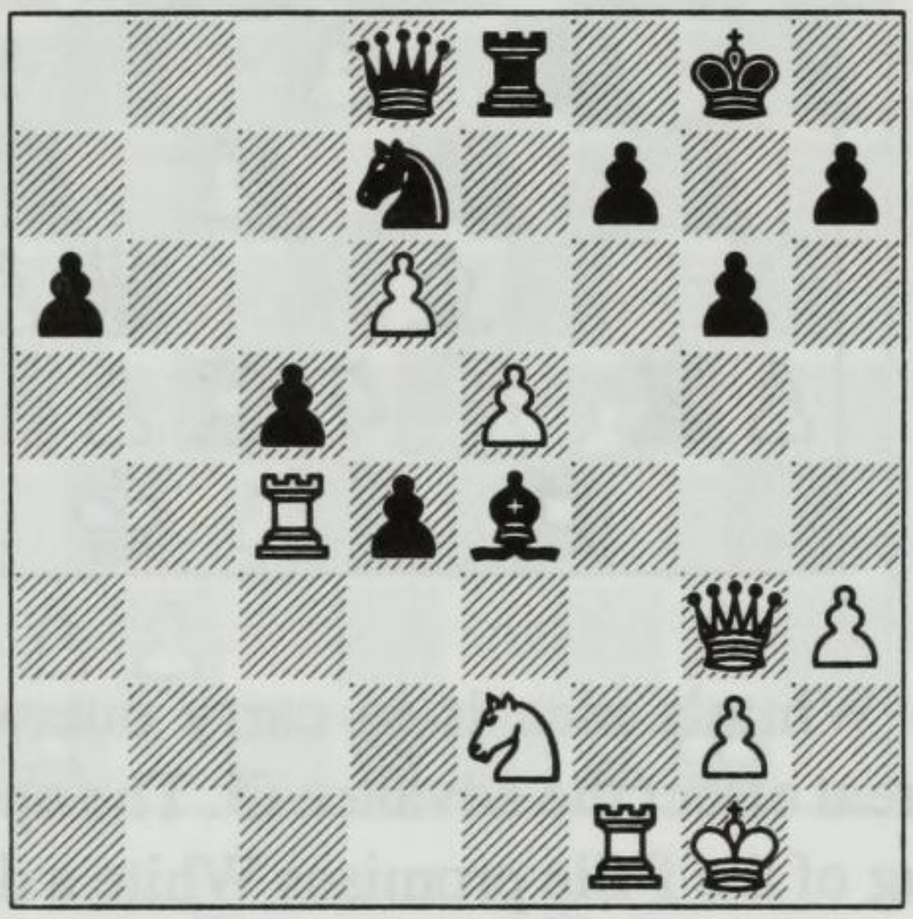
is highly unpleasant. White tries to bring the bishop into play along another diagonal, but here also the black rook catches up with it.

**24 ♗c4 ♖a4**
**25 f5 ♖xc4!**

The loss of his bishop ruins White's hopes of setting up dangerous threats. 25...exf5? 26 ♗xf7+! would have been much weaker.

**26 ♖xc4 exf5**
**27 ♖xf5 ♗e4**
**28 ♖f1** *(D)*

28 ♖g5 ♗d3 was no better.



*B*

**28 ... ♖xe5**

Black would also keep a material advantage sufficient for victory after the simple 28...♘xe5 29 ♖xc5 ♕xd6 when he has three pawns for the exchange, but in this case he would have certain difficulties to overcome in realising his advantage. In the fairly mild time-scramble Black decided to try for more. Now interesting tactical complications once again arise.

**29 ♕f4**

29...♖g5 was threatened.

**29 ... ♕e8**
**30 ♘xd4! cxd4**
**31 ♖fc1 ♔g7**

Weaker was 31...♕e6 32 ♕h6!

**32 ♖c7**

This move sets an interesting trap. After the plausible 32...♕e6 there would follow 33 ♖xd7 ♖f5 34 ♖e7! ♖xf4 35 ♖xe6 fxe6 36 d7 ♖f8 37 ♖c8 and White wins.

**32 ... ♖f5**
**33 ♕d2 ♖d5**

Now the outcome of the game is decided. Black has both a material advantage, and an attack, which is growing with every move.

**34 ♖7c6 ♕e6**
**35 ♕b4 ♗xg2**
**0-1**

Game 70
**Tal – R. Byrne**
*Havana Olympiad, 1966*
Sicilian Defence

**1 e4 c5**

A great and, I must admit, pleasant surprise, as my opponent regularly adopts the French Defence with success. It seems that his choice was influenced by a game he had played against Ivkov a few days previously. At all events, I myself have suffered often enough when playing the Sicilian as Black, and for this reason I particularly relish meeting the defence as White.

**2 ♘f3 ♘c6**

**3 d4 cxd4**
**4 ♘xd4 ♘f6**
**5 ♘c3 d6**
**6 ♗g5 e6**
**7 ♕d2 a6**
**8 0-0-0 ♗d7**
**9 f4 ♗e7**
**10 ♘f3 b5**

This move could easily lead to a whirlpool of tactical complications, e.g. 11 e5 b4! (not 11...dxe5 12 fxe5 b4 13 exf6 bxc3 14 ♕xd7+! ♕xd7 15 ♖xd7 and 16 fxe7) 12 exf6 dxc3 13 ♕xc3 gxf6 14 ♗h4 (14 ♖xd6? ♗xd6 15 ♗xf6 ♗b4!) 14...♖c8. Even sharper variations arise after 12 exd6!? bxc3 13 ♕xc3 ♗f8 14 f5 but Black then obtains a winning counter-attack by 14...♕a5 15 ♗xf6 gxf6 16 ♕xf6 ♖g8 17 fxe6 fxe6 18 ♗c4 ♖b8! etc. On the assumption that my opponent was well prepared for these complications, I selected a quieter positional plan.

**11 ♗xf6 gxf6**

In a few games from the 34th USSR Championship, Grandmaster Simagin had success with the pawn sacrifice 11...♗xf6 12 ♕xd6 b4 13 ♘a4 ♖a7 but I knew that the American Grandmaster was disinclined to part with material at such an early stage of the game.

**12 f5**

This move clearly delineates the strategy to be followed in the rest of the game. Although White has a space advantage, it is by no means easy to attack the enemy position, as the black bishops can become very active. The only critical point is the e6-square, for if Black can be forced to move the e-pawn, then d5 will prove a splendid jumping-off point for his pieces, in particular the c3-knight which will dominate the board. White's plan is to play his bishop to h3, then manoeuvre his c3-knight to f4 or d4 to bring pressure on e6. In the present game Byrne does not manage to counter this plan.

**12 ... ♕a5**

The move 12...♕b6 was worth a try, in order to answer ♘e2 with ...♕f2.

**13 ♔b1 0-0-0**
**14 g3 ♔b8**

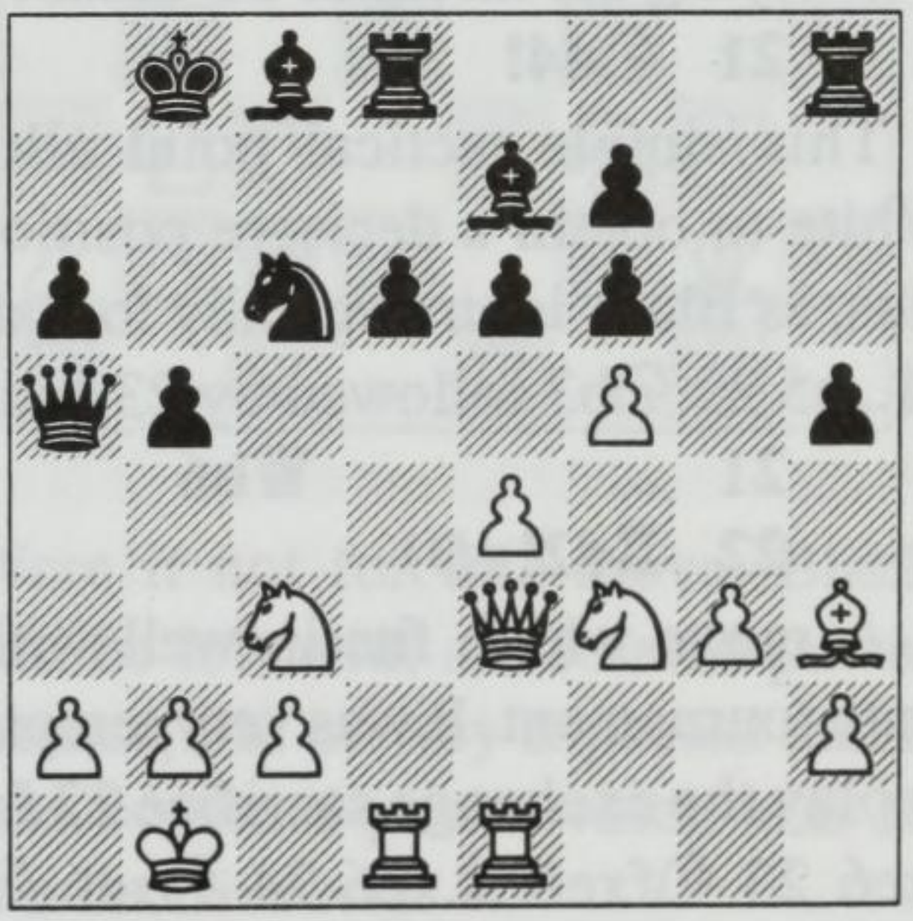
In some variations, if Black moves his knight, he has to watch for the move ♘d5!

**15 ♗h3 ♗c8**
**16 ♖he1 h5**

A move containing defensive (in some lines ♕h6 can be unpleasant) and attacking ideas (to provide for a later ...h4). White spent about half an hour over his next move.

**17 ♕e3** *(D)*

*B*



The plan is still to play the c3-knight to f4, but perhaps there was no need to avoid the exchange of queens, and 17 ♘e2 was more exact. However, firstly I did not want to allow Black any counterplay after 17...♕xd2 18 ♖xd2 ♘e5 19 ♘fd4 h4! and secondly (the main reason!), I simply had no desire to exchange queens.

**17 ... ♗d7**

After this move Black has a very difficult position. It was essential to play 17...b4! 18 ♘e2 ♕c5 19 ♘f4 (19 ♘ed4 ♘xd4 20 ♘xd4 e5!) 19...♕xe3 20 ♖xe3 d5! 21 exd5 (not 21 fxe6 dxe4) 21...e5 with complications not disadvantageous to Black. I would probably have gone into the 19 ♘ed4 variation. Now, however, White can pursue his plan in comparative peace.

**18 ♘e2 ♘e5**

**19 ♘f4 ♘g4**

At least sheltering his e-pawn from attack by the bishop. The alternative 19...♘c4 would lead nowhere.

**20 ♕e2 ♖dg8**

Parrying the threat of 21 ♘xh5.

**21 ♘d4!**

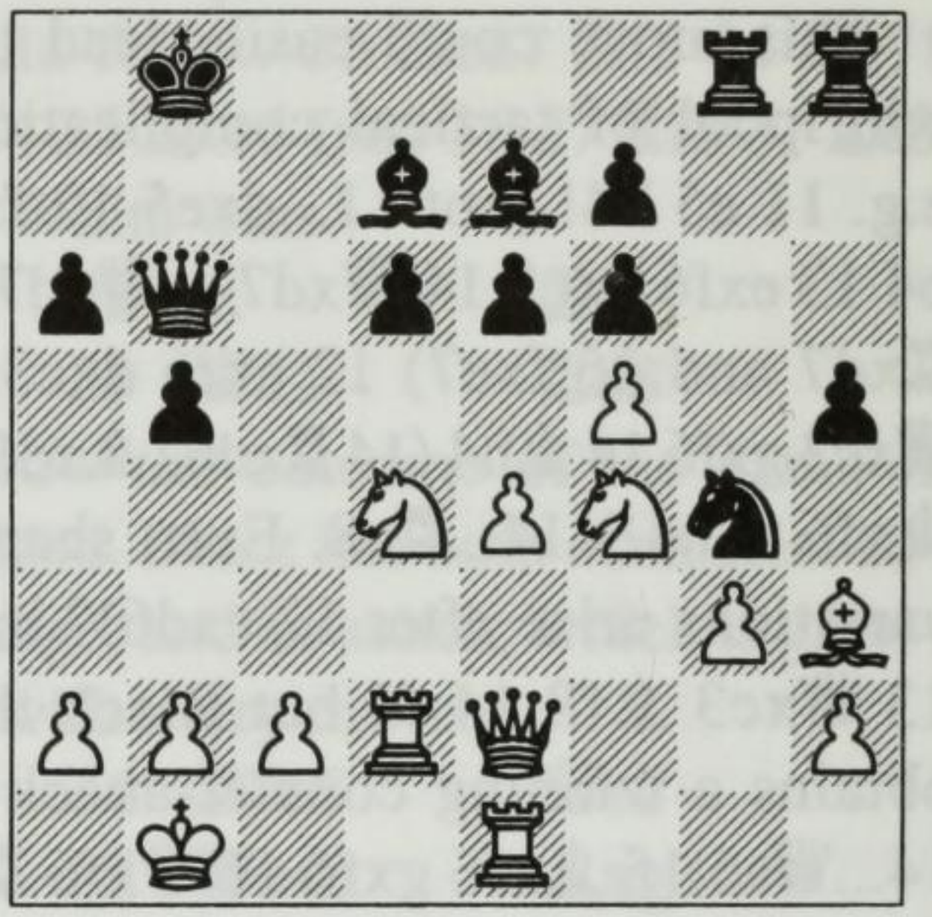
This simple tactical point allows White to obtain a decisive positional plus, as Black is strategically lost after 21...e5 22 ♘b3 followed by 23 ♘d5.

**21 ... ♕b6**

**22 ♖d2!** *(D)*

A move which fits in well with a team tournament. It was very tempting to play the exchange sacrifice 22 fxe6 fxe6 23 ♘fxe6 ♗xe6 24 ♘xe6 ♘f2 (not 24...♕f2? 25 ♗xg4) 25 ♘f4 or 25 ♗g2, as White's initiative is full compensation for the slight material deficit. However, it was essential not to place the team at risk, so the text-move guards f2 and leaves the threat against the e-pawn hanging over Black's head like a sword of Damocles.

*B*



**22 ... e5**

The game is now positionally decided. However, even the sharper 22...d5 brings Black nothing after 23 fxe6 fxe6 24 exd5 e5 25 ♘c6+! (the simplest) 25...♗xc6 26 dxc6 etc.

**23 ♘d5 ♕d8**

**24 ♘b3 ♗c6**

**25 c4!**

White's pieces are ideally placed for an attack against the enemy king, whereas Black's pieces, especially his knight, are misplaced for defence. The rest of the game is easy to follow.

**25 ... ♕d7**

**26 ♘a5**

Eliminating Black's sole effective minor piece, after which his position collapses.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **26** | **...** | **♗d8** | **6** | **♘bd2** | **♗e7** |
| **27** | **♘xc6+** | **♕xc6** | **7** | **e4** | **0-0** |
| **28** | **♖c1** | **♔b7** | | | |
| **29** | **cxb5** | **♕xb5** | | | |
| **30** | **♖d3** | **♔a7** | | | |
| **31** | **♗xg4** | **hxg4** | | | |
| **32** | **♕e3+** | **♔a8** | | | |
| **33** | **♖b3** | | | | |

Better than 'merely' winning the queen by 33 ♖c8+ ♔b7 34 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 35 ♖b3.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **33** | **...** | **♕d7** |
| **34** | **♕d3** | **♔a7** |
| **35** | **♕e3+** | |

35 ♘b4 first was a more convincing method.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **35** | **...** | **♔a8** |
| **36** | **♖b6!** | **1-0** |

After 36...a5 37 ♖a6+ ♔b8 38 ♖c8+! Black is mated.

## Game 71
## Bilek – Tal
*Moscow 1967*
King's Indian Attack

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **♘f3** | **♘f6** |
| **2** | **g3** | **b5** |

It is doubtful whether anyone would decide on such a move in an elimination event, where every half point is worth its weight in gold, but the Moscow Tournament gave Grandmasters the pleasant opportunity to forget arithmetical calculations, and simply to play chess.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **3** | **♗g2** | **♗b7** |
| **4** | **0-0** | **e6** |
| **5** | **d3** | **d5** |

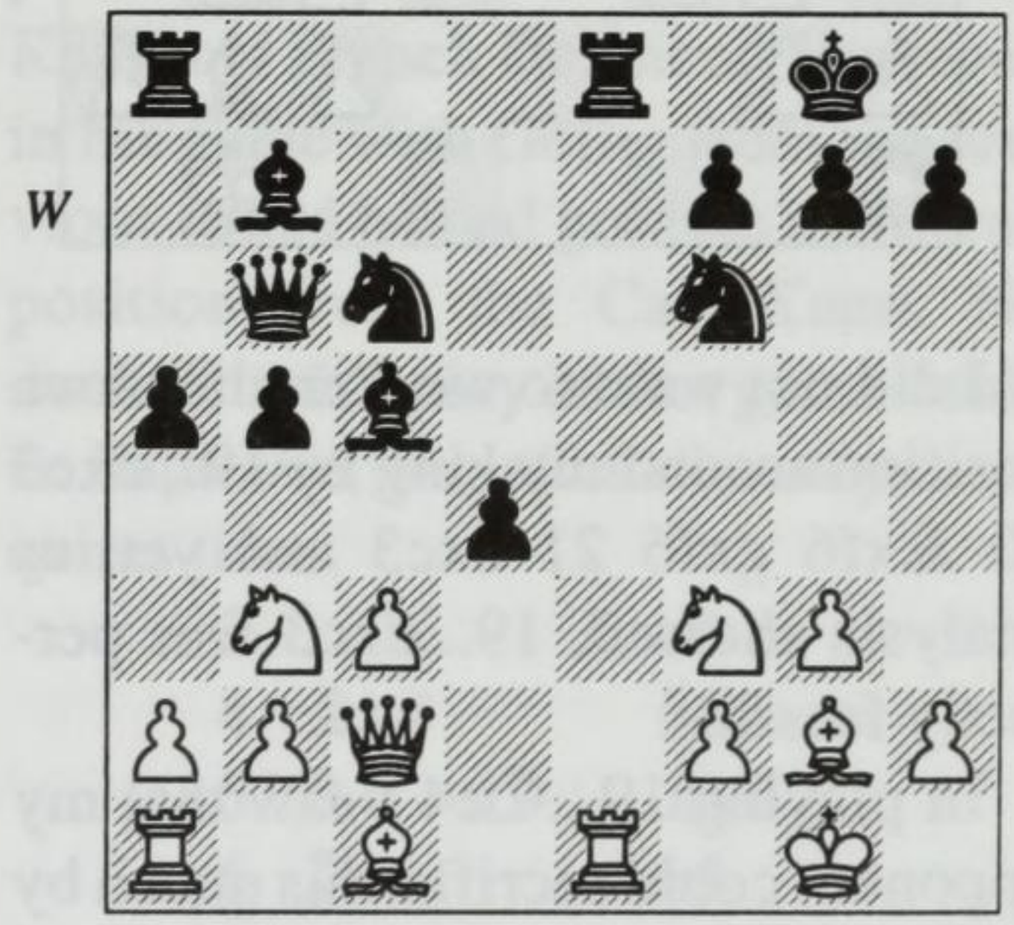
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **6** | **♘bd2** | **♗e7** |
| **7** | **e4** | **0-0** |

On 7...dxe4, 8 ♘g5 is good. By then recapturing on e4 with a knight, White would be able to exploit the weakness of the c5-square.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **8** | **♕e2** | **c5** |
| **9** | **♖e1** | **♘c6** |
| **10** | **c3** | **a5** |
| **11** | **exd5** | |

The logical counter to Black's plan. After 11...♘xd5, White can exploit the drawback of 10...a5 by 12 a4! when his knight will soon be favourably posted on c4.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **11** | **...** | **exd5** |
| **12** | **d4** | **♕b6** |
| **13** | **dxc5** | **♗xc5** |
| **14** | **♘b3** | **♖fe8** |
| **15** | **♕c2** | **d4** *(D)* |




Were it not for this move, Black would be left with an isolated pawn. Of course, I in no way expected that it would be the d-pawn which was to play a decisive role.

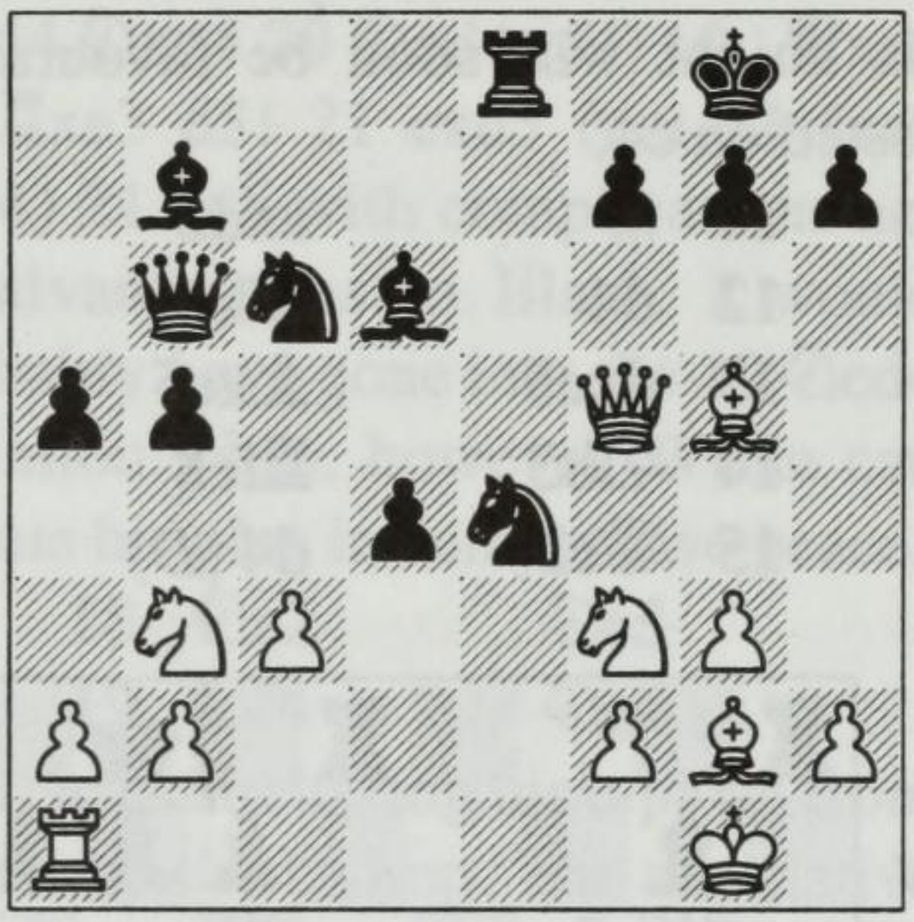
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **16** | **♕f5** | |

This forces Black to give up the defence of his d-pawn.

**16 ... ♖xe1+**
**17 ♘xe1 ♖e8**
**18 ♘f3**

By continuing 18 ♗f4, White could have come out a pawn ahead, for example 18...♗f8 19 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 20 cxd4, but by 20...♘e4 I was hoping to obtain counterplay.

**18 ... ♗d6**
**19 ♗g5 ♘e4** *(D)*




I did not want to weaken the pawn position around my king by 19...dxc3 20 ♗xf6 gxf6 21 bxc3 and yet, as analysis showed, 19...dxc3 was perfectly feasible.

In playing 19...♘e4 I saw that my opponent could sacrifice his queen by 20 ♖e1 ♘e7 21 ♖xe4 ♘xf5 22 ♖xe8+ ♗f8. Now 23 ♘e5 (with the threats of 24 ♘d7 and 24 ♖xf8+) 23...♕c7 24 ♗xb7 and now 24...♕xb7 25 ♘c5 ♕d5 26 ♘cd7 h6 27 ♘xf8 hxg5 enables White to conclude his attack successfully: 28 ♘fg6+ ♔h7 29 ♖h8 mate. In the end I decided that I would answer 24 ♗xb7 not with 24...♕xb7 but with 24...h6. Of course, in this case also Black's position remains highly dubious, and it was with difficulty that I persuaded myself that I must be able to find some kind of counterplay. Had I really wanted to, it would not have been difficult to continue the variation: 25 ♗d5 ♘d6 26 ♗d8 ♕c8 27 ♘xf7 ♘xf7 28 ♘xd4 ♕d7 29 ♗c6! and Black is forced to capitulate.

Later 24...♘d6! was discovered to be an improvement, but White can improve earlier with 24 ♗d8! instead of 24 ♗xb7.

**20 ♖e1 ♘e7**

Alas, Black cannot avoid the unfavourable variation: in the case of 20...g6 or 20...♗c8 the queen sacrifice gives White an irresistible attack. If he sacrifices a piece himself by 20...dxc3 21 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 22 ♕xe4 ♘e5 then comes 23 ♕e2 cxb2 24 ♘bd2 and White succeeds in consolidating while keeping his material advantage.

**21 ♗xe7**

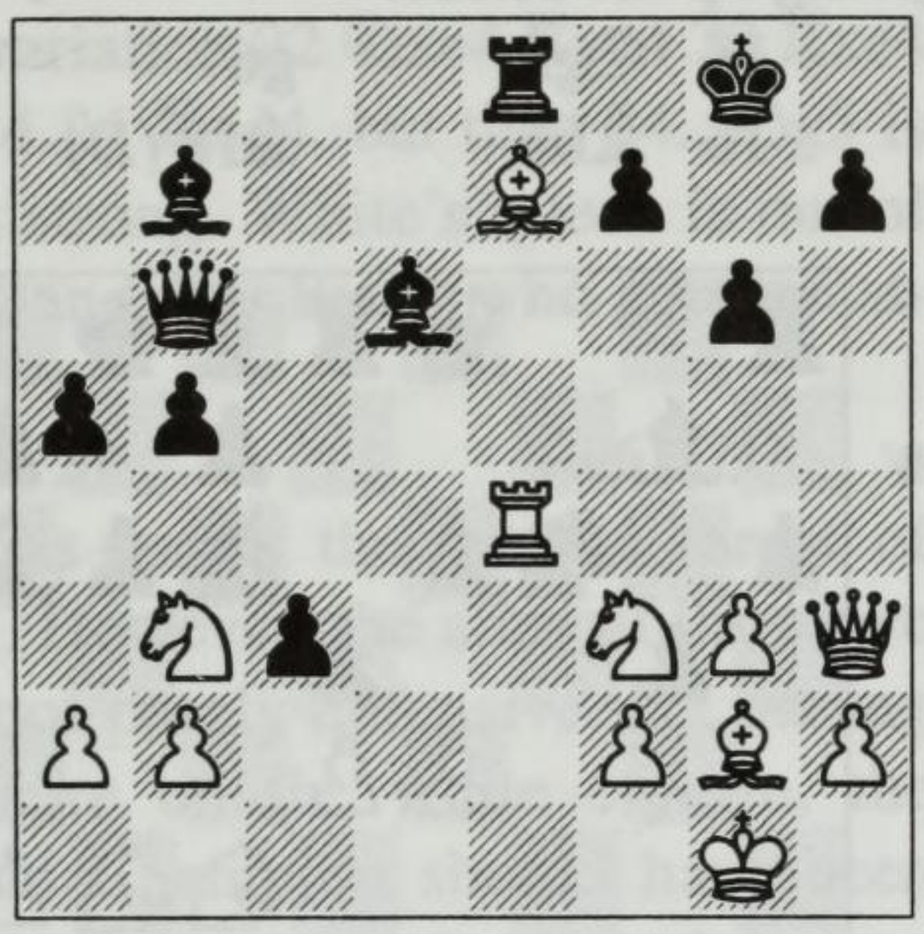
This is what I was secretly hoping for; now the situation changes instantly. As Bilek explained after the game, instead of 23 ♘e5 (cf. the note on 19...♘e4) he considered only the more modest 23 ♘fxd4, which is refuted by 23...♘d6.

**21 ... g6**

An important intermediate move, which drives the queen away.

**22 ♕h3 dxc3**
**23 ♖xe4** *(D)*

23 ♗xd6 fails to 23...♕xf2+ 24 ♔h1 ♕xe1+ 25 ♘xe1 ♘f2+ 26 ♔g1 ♘xh3+ 27 ♔f1 ♗xg2+ 28 ♔xg2 cxb2 29 ♘d2 ♖d8.




**23 ... cxb2**

This is the whole point. White's ♘g5 is not a real threat, since Black has the simple reply ...h5. In his preliminary calculations, the Hungarian Grandmaster thought that he had here a spectacular continuation: 24 ♕h6 b1♕+ 25 ♗f1 ♕xe4 26 ♘g5, but it is Black to move, and he is the first to give mate – 26...♕h1. As a result White is forced back on to the defensive.

**24 ♖e1**

Also bad for White is 24 ♘bd2 ♗xe4 25 ♘g5 h5 26 ♗xd6 ♗f5! and 27...♕xd6.

**24 ... ♖xe7**
**25 ♖b1 a4**
**26 ♘bd4**

More stubborn is 26 ♖xb2 axb3 27 axb3 when Black still has to demonstrate that his positional advantage is sufficient for victory.

**26 ... ♗xf3**

26...a3 was also possible.

**27 ♘xf3 ♖e2**
**28 ♖f1**

Similarly hopeless was 28 ♕c8+ ♔g7 29 ♕c3+ ♗e5!.

**28 ... ♖xf2**
**29 ♕c8+ ♔g7**
**30 ♕c3+ f6**
**0-1**

Game 72
**Tal – Petrosian**
*Moscow 1967*
Ruy Lopez

**1 e4 e5**
**2 ♘f3 ♘c6**
**3 ♗b5**

In recent times the World Champion has given preference to the Caro-Kann and French Defences. However, in his game with Geller from the previous round he had got into a difficult position from the Caro-Kann. No doubt Black's play in that game could be improved, but, after all, analysis requires time.

**3 ... a6**
**4 ♗a4 ♘f6**
**5 0-0 ♗e7**
**6 ♖e1 b5**
**7 ♗b3 0-0**

As Petrosian was making this move, Spassky and Geller walked past and smiled. Their glances seemed to say 'Surely the World Champion isn't going to play the Marshall Attack?'.

**8 c3 d6**

It is not without reason that they say that the threat is stronger than its execution!

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **9** | **h3** | **♘a5** |
| **10** | **♗c2** | **c5** |
| **11** | **d4** | **♘c6** |
| **12** | **♘bd2** | **cxd4** |
| **13** | **cxd4** | **♗b7** |

A system which does not enjoy great popularity. It used to be played ten years ago but nowadays the variations commencing with 9...h6 or 9...♘b8 are preferred. In fact Petrosian played 13...♗b7 in one of our games in the 1959 Candidates Tournament. On that occasion, I replied 14 a3 and after 14...exd4 Black quickly reached a satisfactory position. The most important moves here are 14 d5 and 14 ♘f1. As far as I remember, theory did not give an answer as to which of the two continuations is more promising. Now, when opening fashions have changed, it is even more difficult to answer.

**14 ♘f1**

Authors of theoretical reviews also suggest the variation 14 d5 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 a5 16 a3 ♘a6, with somewhat better chances for White.

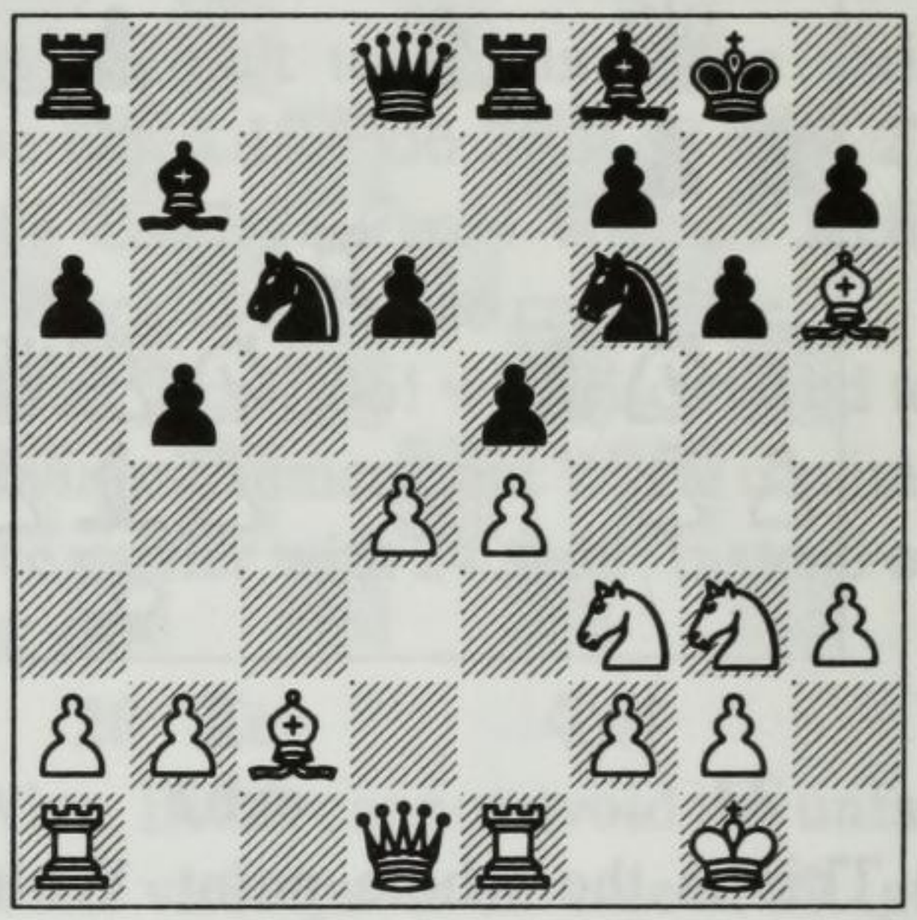
**14 ... ♖e8**

The World Champion made this move after lengthy consideration. The move 14...exd4 is justified after 15 ♘xd4 since then Black quickly develops his forces by 15...♘xd4 16 ♕xd4 ♖c8 17 ♘e3 d5 and it would be White who would have to worry about equalising. However, I was planning to play not 15 ♘xd4, but 15 ♘g3 and then ♘f5, not hurrying to recapture the pawn on d4.

The idea of Petrosian's move is to reinforce the e5-square, and to avoid giving up the centre.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **15** | **♘g3** | **g6** |
| **16** | **♗h6** | **♗f8** *(D)* |

*W*



**17 ♕d2**

It is possible that this move is not the strongest. I wanted to provoke Black into capturing on d4. After 17 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 18 ♕d2 ♔g7 19 ♖ad1 White would have kept some initiative.

**17 ... ♘xd4**

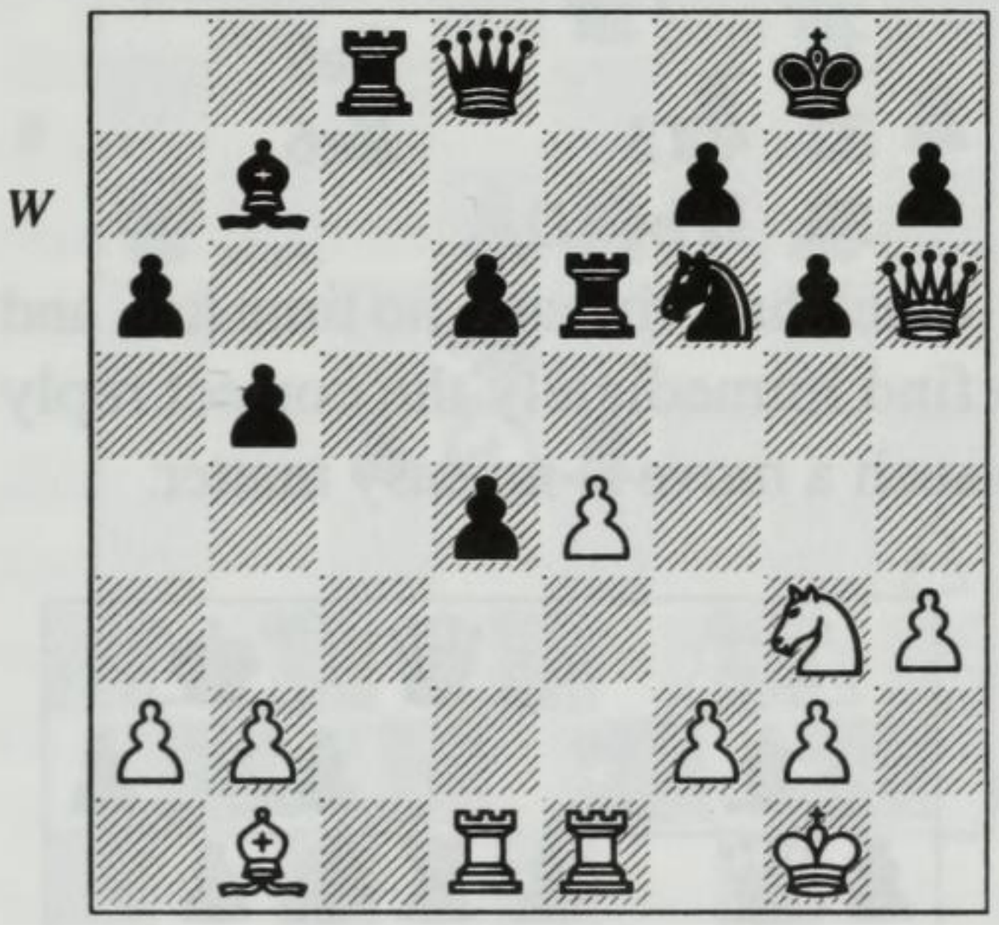
Forced. Now White cannot create any real threats on the kingside, while his queen is out of play on h6.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **18** | **♘xd4** | **♗xh6** |
| **19** | **♕xh6** | **exd4** |
| **20** | **♖ad1** | **♖c8** |
| **21** | **♗b1** | |

21 ♗b3 was tempting, but after 21...♗xe4 I didn't see how I could strengthen my attack. Thus 22 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 23 ♖xe4 ♘xe4 24 ♗xf7+ gives

White at best perpetual check. On 22 ♖xd4 there could follow 22...♗c2! If 22 ♕f4, then 22...♗c6 is perfectly adequate, so as to recapture with the bishop after 23 ♖xe8+. There is also the variation 22 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 23 ♖xe4 ♘xe4 24 ♖xd4, but then 24...♘g5 is very strong. White's queen is out of play, and it is Black who gets the attack!

**21 ... ♖e6!** *(D)*


W

This meets the tactical threat of ♘f5. However, the aims of the move are not purely defensive. By putting pressure on the white e-pawn, the World Champion should have been able to reach a perfectly satisfactory position.

**22 ♖xd4 ♕e7**

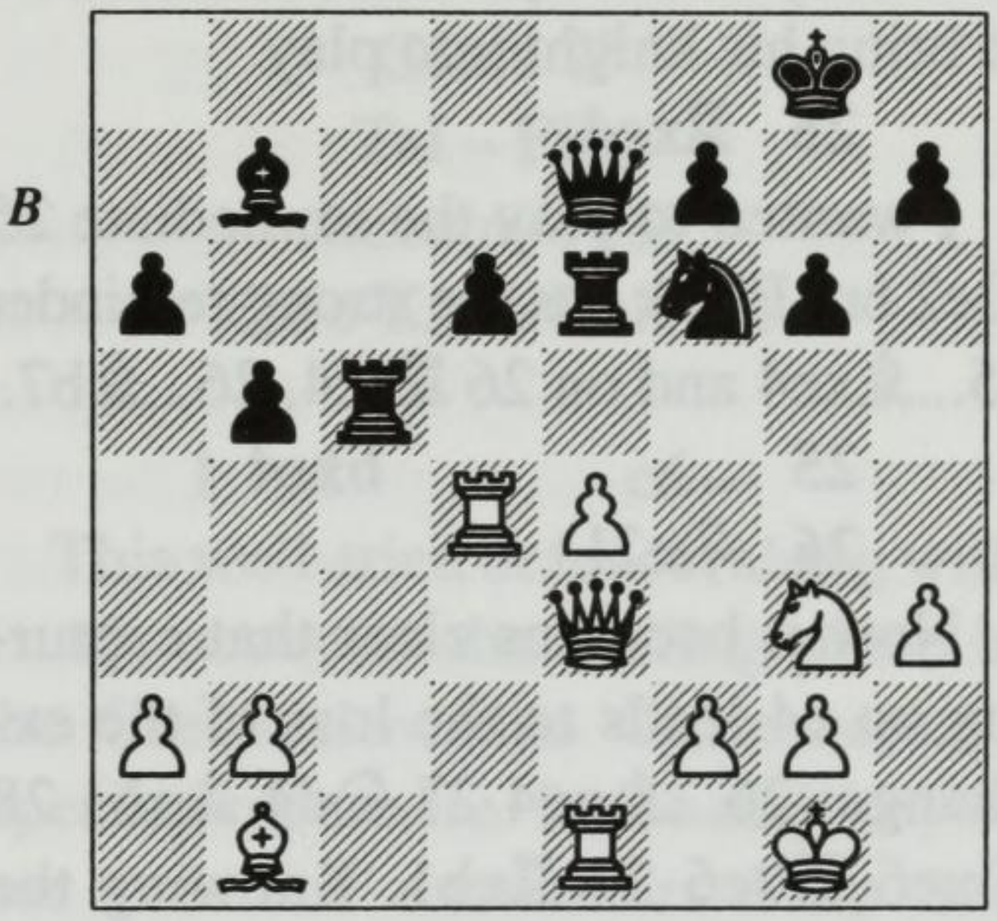
A critical moment. Black prepares 23...d5, and in addition plans to attack the e-pawn by ...♖e8 (for instance, after 23 ♕e3).

**23 ♕g5**

This prevents 23...♖e8, since there follows 24 ♘f5. In playing 23 ♕g5 I wanted to invite one of the enemy rooks onto the fourth rank. With a black rook on e5, I would later win an important tempo by f4.

**23 ... ♖c5**

**24 ♕e3** *(D)*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Not, of course, 24 ♘f5? ♖xf5.

This must be considered the critical position. The move made by the World Champion, 24...♖c4, led him into a difficult position. In fact Black had a choice of several continuations. On 24...h5 I was planning to reinforce the e4-square by 25 f3, after which it turns out that Black has only succeeded in weakening his kingside by the advance of his h-pawn. 24...d5 would lead to great complications, for example 25 e5 ♘d7 26 f4 f6 27 ♕d2 fxe5 28 f5 ♖f6 29 ♖g4, with dangerous threats. Even so, Black has sufficient defensive resources. Of greatest interest is the move 24...♖c8. White is tied to the defence of his e-pawn, and it is not easy for him to find an active post for his knight. In addition, the

paradoxical 24...♘h5 (which was suggested by Petrosian after the game) deserves attention.

**24 ... ♖c4**

This move appears logical. Black exchanges off the active white rook, but now White has at his disposal a tactical possibility which allows him to bring his knight into play.

**25 ♖xc4**

I wanted to play the immediate 25 ♘e2 but Black has the strong rejoinder 25...♗xe4 and on 26 ♖xc4, 26...♗b7.

**25 ... bxc4**

**26 ♘e2!**

Now it becomes clear that capturing on e4 leads to the loss of the exchange: 26...♗xe4 27 ♘d4 ♗xb1 28 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 29 ♖xb1. Knowing the Champion's particular liking for exchange sacrifices, I examined the resulting position very carefully. It seemed that everything would turn out alright.

**26 ... ♕c7**

Both players were already short of time. White has at his disposal two promising plans: (1) to play ♘c3, ♕d4 and ♖d1, with pressure on the black d-pawn; and (2) to try to prepare e5, so as to open the diagonal for my bishop. However, then the range of Black's bishop also increases.

Black's plan is to try to effect ...d5 or ...c3.

**27 ♘d4 ♖e5**

**28 ♘f3 ♖c5**

Now nothing real is promised by 29 ♕d4 ♘d7 30 ♖d1 c3 31 bxc3 ♖xc3 32 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 33 ♖xd6 ♖c1+ 34 ♔h2 ♖xb1 35 ♖xd7 ♗xe4. On 36 ♘d2, Black must play not 36...♖d1, because of 37 ♘xe4, but 36...♖b4. White can win the f-pawn by 36 ♘g5 (instead of 36 ♘d2), but it is doubtful whether this gives him any appreciable advantage, since Black has a strong light-squared bishop and besides, there is little material on the board.

**29 ♖c1**

With both players short of time, White prefers to maintain the tension.

**29 ... ♕c6**

**30 ♘d4 ♕e8**

**31 ♖e1**

Depending on my opponent's reply, I decided to keep open for myself the possibility of play on both flanks.

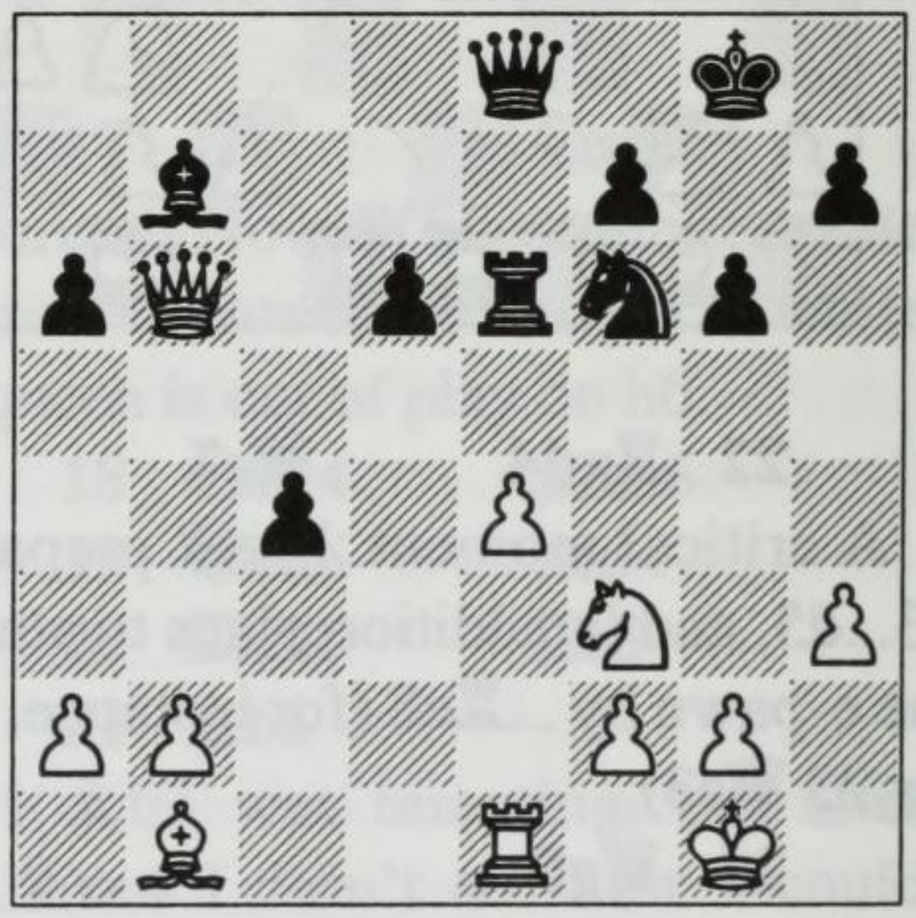
**31 ... ♖e5**

**32 ♘f3 ♖e6**

**33 ♕b6** *(D)*

Black had virtually no time left, and to find immediately the correct reply to such a move is no easy matter.

*B*



**33 ... ♗xe4**

This loses. Essential was 33...♕e7, to which I would have replied 34 ♘d4. After 34...♖e5 35 f4 ♖c5 36 b4 great complications would arise.

**34 ♘d4**

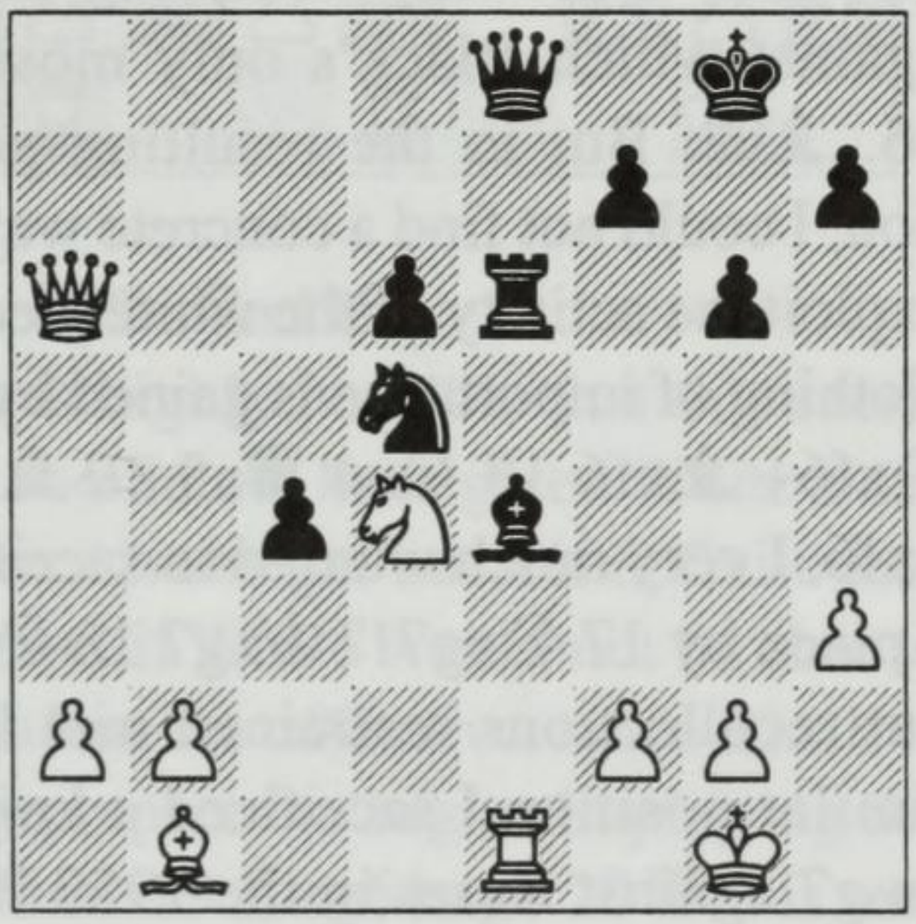
It turns out that Black cannot play 34...♗xb1 because of 35 ♘xe6, and on 35...♗f5, 36 ♕d8! I think that in his preliminary calculations Petrosian overlooked this move. After 36 ♕d4 ♕e7 Black would win!

**34 ... ♘d5**

If 34...♖e5, then 35 ♕xd6 with a winning position.

**35 ♕xa6** *(D)*

Here also 35...♗xb1 fails to 36 ♘xe6 ♗f5 37 ♕xd6.



*B*

**35 ... ♖e7**

**36 ♕c6**

The strongest continuation. In the case of 36 ♕xd6 ♗xb1 37 ♖xb1 ♖e1+ 38 ♖xe1 ♕xe1+ 39 ♔h2 ♕e4 (or perhaps 39...♕xf2) White is still a very long way from a win. Now, however, Black has no satisfactory reply.

**36 ... ♘f6**

**37 ♕xd6**

At this point the flag on my opponent's clock was precariously poised. But his position is hopeless, and he resigned after ...

**37 ... ♖e6**

**38 ♘xe6 1-0**

Game 73

**Tal – Filip**

*Moscow 1967*

Caro-Kann Defence

**1 e4 c6**

This well-tried defence, along with 1...e5, occupies the leading place in the Czechoslovakian Grandmaster's opening repertoire. In the majority of our previous encounters Filip had played 1...e5. Since, for several years now, much has been written about how Tal is unhappy against the Caro-Kann, my opponent no doubt decided to test the correctness of this opinion.

**2 d4 d5**

**3 ♘c3**

In recent events this order of moves has occurred in my games comparatively rarely.

**3 ... dxe4**

**4 ♘xe4 ♘d7**

**5 ♘f3**

Nowadays the variation 5 ♗c4 ♘gf6 6 ♘g5 is more fashionable, but it is not known how long this fashion will last. In any case, the old continuation adopted by me in the present game has in no way been refuted over the past half-century.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **5** | **...** | **♘gf6** |
| | **6** | **♘g3** | **e6** |
| | **7** | **♗d3** | **♗e7** |
| | **8** | **♕e2** | **c5** |
| | **9** | **0-0** | |

With his 8th move White expressed his preparedness to castle queenside. A move later he thought better of it!

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **9** | **...** | **0-0** |
| | **10** | **♖d1** | **cxd4** |

Probably 10...♕c7 was a little more accurate, after which 11 ♘f5? fails to 11...exf5 12 ♕xe7 ♖e8. I intended to play 11 c4, so as to provoke the exchange in the centre all the same, freeing White's pieces (on 11 c4, 11...b6 is bad because of 12 d5 exd5 13 ♕xe7 ♖e8 14 ♗xh7+!).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **11** | **♘xd4** | **♖e8** |
| | **12** | **b3** | |

This bishop will be most actively placed on the long diagonal, taking into account the fact that White has chosen the enemy king as the object of his attack. It is not so easy for Black to complete the development of his pieces.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **12** | **...** | **♕b6** |
| | **13** | **♗b2** | **♘f8** |

Black could have eliminated one of the bishops by 13...♘c5 but both the quiet 14 ♘f3 ♘xd3 15 ♖xd3 and the sharper 14 ♗c4 ♘a4 15 bxa4 ♕xb2 16 ♘b5 lead to a favourable position for White.

| | | | |
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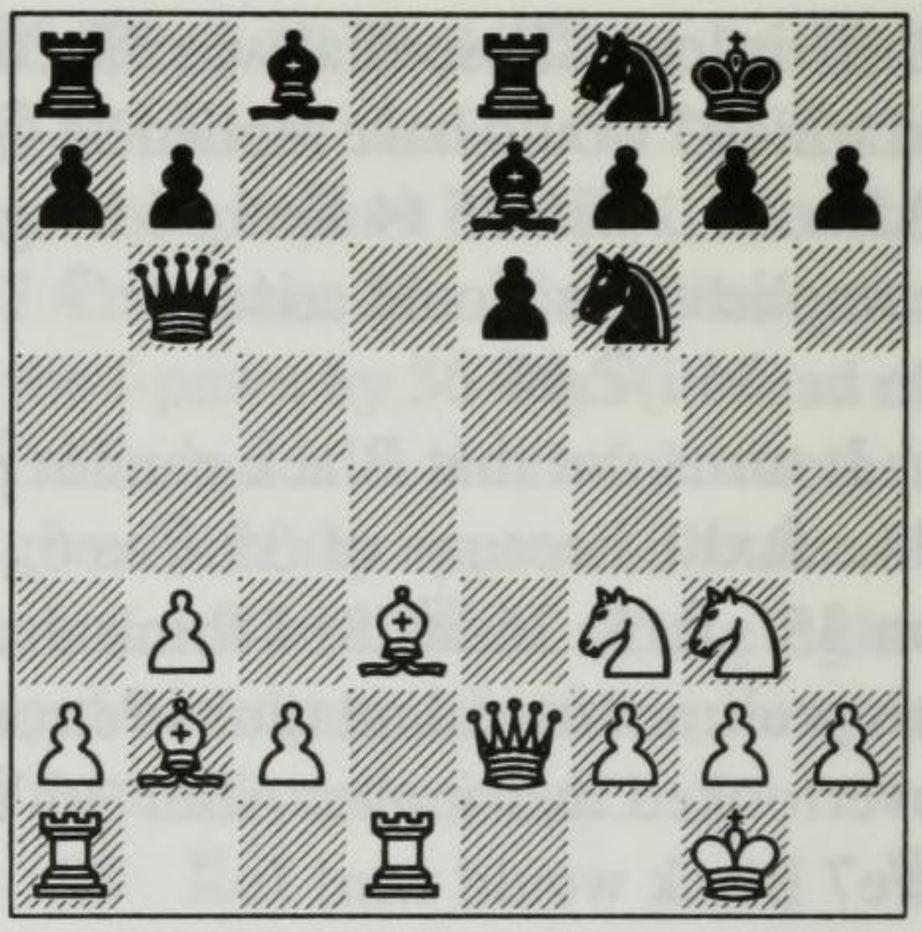
| | **14** | **♘f3** *(D)* | |

The knight transfers itself to e5 where it is most threatening to the enemy king.



*B*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **14** | **...** | **♗d7** |
| | **15** | **♘e5** | **♖ad8** |
| | **16** | **♘e4** | |

Black has succeeded in almost completing the mobilisation of his forces. 16 ♘h5 was very tempting here, against which Black's only move is 16...♗c8. But in the resulting position, I could not find a concrete way to exploit the activity of the white pieces. Nothing of importance is gained by 17 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 18 ♘c4 ♕c5 19 ♗xf6 gxf6. I very much wanted to sacrifice a piece by 17 ♘xg7!? ♔xg7 18 ♘g4, but recollections restrained me! In a similar position I sacrificed a knight on g7 against Keres in the 1959 Peoples' Spartakiad. On that occasion, the sacrifice was inadequate. Here White consoled himself with the idea of a possible sacrifice on another, neighbouring square.

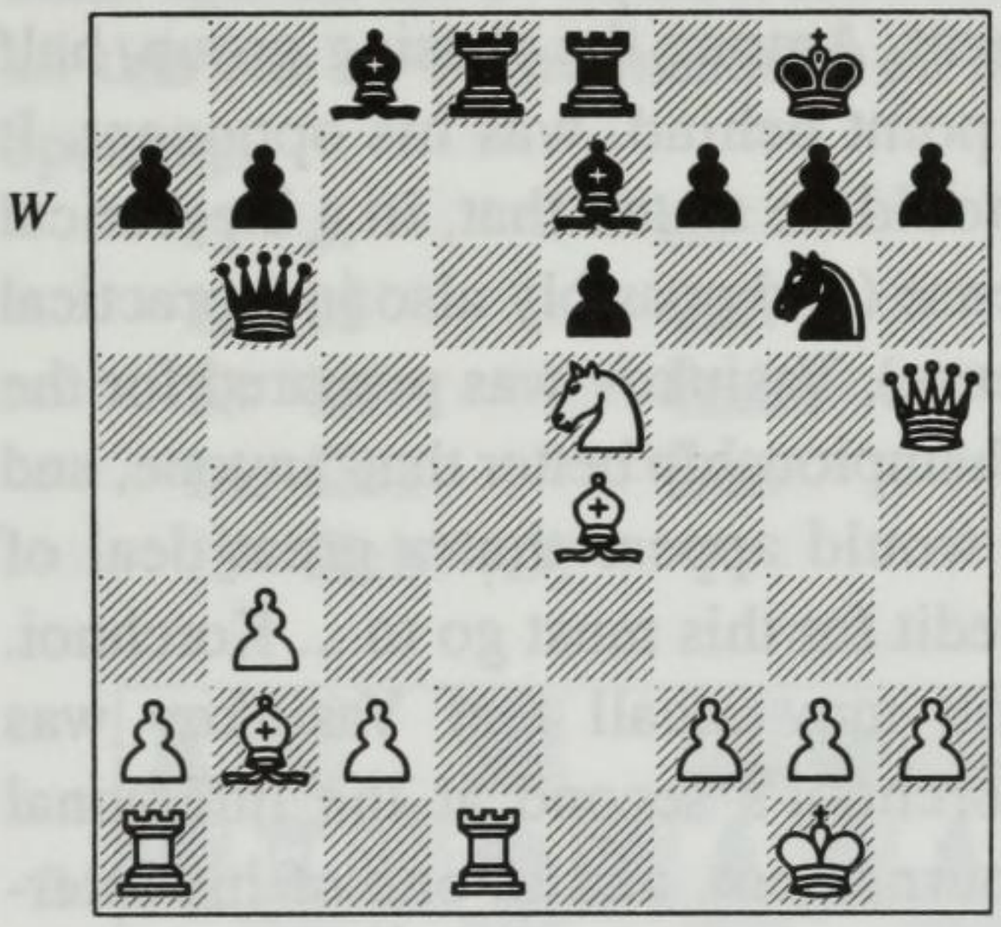
| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **16** | **...** | **♘xe4** |
| | **17** | **♗xe4** | **♗c8!** |
| | **18** | **♕h5** | |

White could have provoked a weakening in the black position by 18

♕f3, but after 18...f6 nothing real is achieved. The move in the game is the prelude to an unclear combination.

**18 ... ♘g6** *(D)*

Evidently the only move. Out of the question were 18...f6 19 ♗xh7+! and mate in two moves, or 18...g6 19 ♘g4! f6 20 ♗xf6!.



W

**19 ♘xf7!?**

It is highly possible that this sacrifice should not have given White a decisive advantage, but it is definite that without it White would not be able to maintain the offensive, since Black is fully prepared to begin simplifying the position. 19 ♗xg6 hxg6 20 ♕f3 is met by the cold-blooded reply 20...♖f8! A great deal of time was spent on deciding whether to sacrifice the knight immediately, or after the preliminary exchange of a pair of rooks. However, during my calculations it became clear that after 19 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 20 ♘xf7, Black has the strong rejoinder 20...♖f8!, forcing the line 21 ♗xg6 hxg6 22 ♕h8+ (22 ♘h6+? ♔h7!) 22...♔xf7 23 ♕xg7+ ♔e8 24 ♕xg6+ ♖f7, when Black can look confidently to the future. After the immediate capture on f7 Black does not have this possibility as 19...♖xd1+ 20 ♖xd1 ♖f8 is met by 21 ♗d4.

**19 ... ♔xf7**
**20 ♕xh7 e5**
**21 ♖xd8 ♖xd8**

Capturing with the bishop would not change the character of the position. White would have continued 22 ♕h5, as in the game.

**22 ♕h5!**

This is the idea of the sacrifice. The pin on the knight is most unpleasant for Black, and it is not easy for him to free himself. On 22...♕f6 White gains a marked advantage by 23 f4! (but not 23 h4? ♖h8! 24 ♗xg6+ ♕xg6 25 ♕xh8 ♗h3!) 23...♖h8 24 ♗xg6+ ♔g8 25 ♕xe5, or 23...♗c5+ 24 ♔h1 ♖h8 25 ♗xg6+ ♔g8 26 ♕g5!

Evidently, it was absolutely necessary for Black to seek counterplay against the one vulnerable point in White's position, f2. After 22...♖d2! 23 ♖f1 ♗c5 White gains nothing concrete by 24 ♔h1 ♖xf2 25 ♖xf2 ♗xf2 26 ♗d5+ ♔e7 (26...♗e6? 27 ♕f5+). White would probably have had to play 24 ♗c3 ♖xf2 (bad is 24...♗xf2+ 25 ♔h1) 25 ♕xg6+ ♕xg6 26 ♗xg6+ ♔xg6 27 ♖xf2 remaining with an extra pawn, but after 27...♗f5 the presence of opposite-coloured bishops makes a draw inevitable. Having missed the correct path, Black very quickly finds himself in a critical position.

**22 ... ♕e6**

**23 h3!**

There is no need for White to hurry. This prophylactic move against the threat of 23...♕g4 is essential.

**23 ... ♗c5**

Black could have freed his king by 23...♖d6 24 ♖e1 ♔f8, but after 25 ♖e3 his difficulties would not have diminished. In particular, White can transpose into a favourable ending by 25...♘f4 26 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 27 ♗xe5 ♖d1+ 28 ♔h2 ♗d6 29 ♗xd6+ ♖xd6 30 ♖f3 ♖f6 31 ♖c3.

**24 ♔h1**

Now White's f-pawn is ready to advance.

**24 ... ♗d4**

Better defensive chances were offered by 24...♖d6 when 25 f4 exf4 26 ♕xc5 ♕xe4 27 ♕xd6 ♗xh3 is unclear. However, by continuing 25 ♖e1 ♗d4 26 ♗a3, or 26 c3, White would keep a dangerous initiative.

**25 ♖d1**

Black probably underestimated the strength of this move. Now material losses result from 25...♖h8 26 ♗xg6+ ♔g8 27 ♕g5, when the sacrifice on h3 is insufficient, while in the case of 25...♗b6, possible is 26 ♖f1, and also the more energetic 26 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 27 f4.

**25 ... ♖d6**

**26 ♗a3 ♖a6**

**27 ♖xd4! 1-0**

The variation 27...exd4 28 ♗d5 ♖xa3 29 ♕f5+ is completely convincing.

## Game 74

## Tal – Vasiukov

*USSR Championship, Kharkov 1967*

Alekhine Defence

The result of this game was of great significance. It was played two rounds before the finish, when the Moscow Grandmaster was leading the tournament. Among the chasing group, half a point behind, was his opponent. It should be stated that, in a theoretical sense (and possibly also in a practical sense), Vasiukov was prepared for the Championship better than anyone, and it would appear that a great deal of credit for this must go to ... Korchnoi. You may recall that Vasiukov was Korchnoi's second at the Interzonal Tournament, and in one of his interviews he wrote roughly the following:

'I hope that in some way I was able to assist my 'ward'; as for myself, the creative contact with Korchnoi afforded me great satisfaction, and has brought certain benefits'.

I was to sense Korchnoi's influence straight away.

**1 e4 ♘f6**

Korchnoi is one of the few modern Grandmasters who, from time to time, successfully adopts this defence, which in general does not enjoy a particularly good reputation.

**2 e5 ♘d5**

**3 d4 d6**

**4 ♘f3 ♗g4**

**5 ♗e2 e6**

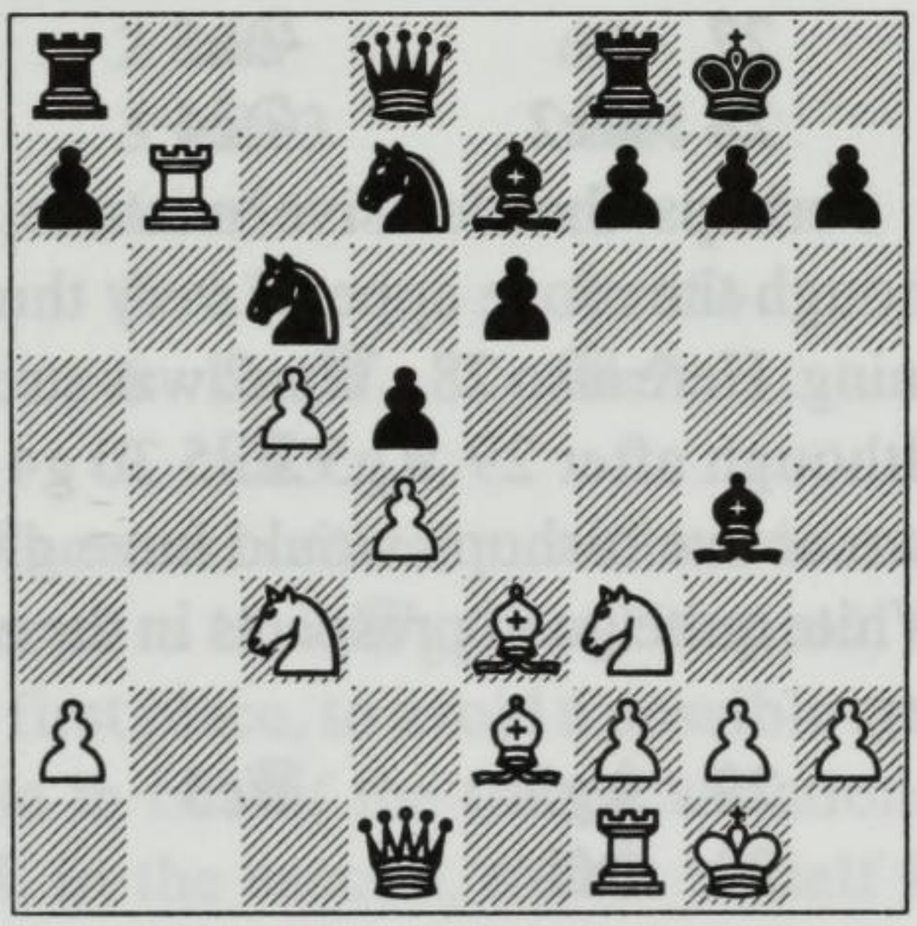
**6 0-0 ♘c6**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **7** | **c4** | **♘b6** |
| **8** | **exd6** | **cxd6** |
| **9** | **b3** | **♗e7** |
| **10** | **♘c3** | **0-0** |
| **11** | **♗e3** | |

White plans to mobilise his forces fully. Against this Vasiukov begins to set up counterplay, directed in the main against the d4-square. However, all this can be found in books on the openings.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **11** | **...** | **d5** |
| **12** | **c5** | **♘d7** |
| **13** | **b4** | **♘xb4** |
| **14** | **♖b1** | **♘c6** |
| **15** | **♖xb7** *(D)* | |

*B*



This was the limit of my opening knowledge. Theory apparently considers here either 15...a5 or 15...♕c8. The move found by Vasiukov is much stronger: Black reinforces his blockading knight on c6, and straight away eliminates the enemy rook.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **15** | **...** | **♖b8!** |
| **16** | **♖xb8** | **♘dxb8** |
| **17** | **h3** | |

I did not want to waste time like this; the exchange on f3 is, in any case, part of Black's plan (d4 is weakened), but at the same time the exchange frees White's hands to a certain extent. If the bishop retreats to f5 then White is insured against pressure on d4, while on 17...♗h5 he has the possibility of playing g4 in some cases.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **17** | **...** | **♗xf3** |
| **18** | **♗xf3** | **♕a5!** |

Black paralyses his opponent's activity on the queenside; a4 would have been an excellent post for the white queen. Incidentally, it should be mentioned that 18...♗xc5? 19 dxc5 d4 fails to 20 ♕a4.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **19** | **♕d3** | **♗f6** |

Here Vasiukov offered a draw.

White declined the offer: in the first place a draw was no good to him, and in the second I considered White's position to be superior. It is possible, however, that I was over-optimistic.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **20** | **♖b1** | **♘a6** |

Threatening 21...♘xc5.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **21** | **♖b5** | **♘ab4!** |

With the help of this clever manoeuvre, Black maintains the equilibrium. After both 21...♕c7 22 ♘e2 and 21...♕a3 22 ♗e2, with the threat of 23 ♘xd5, his position would have become unpleasant.

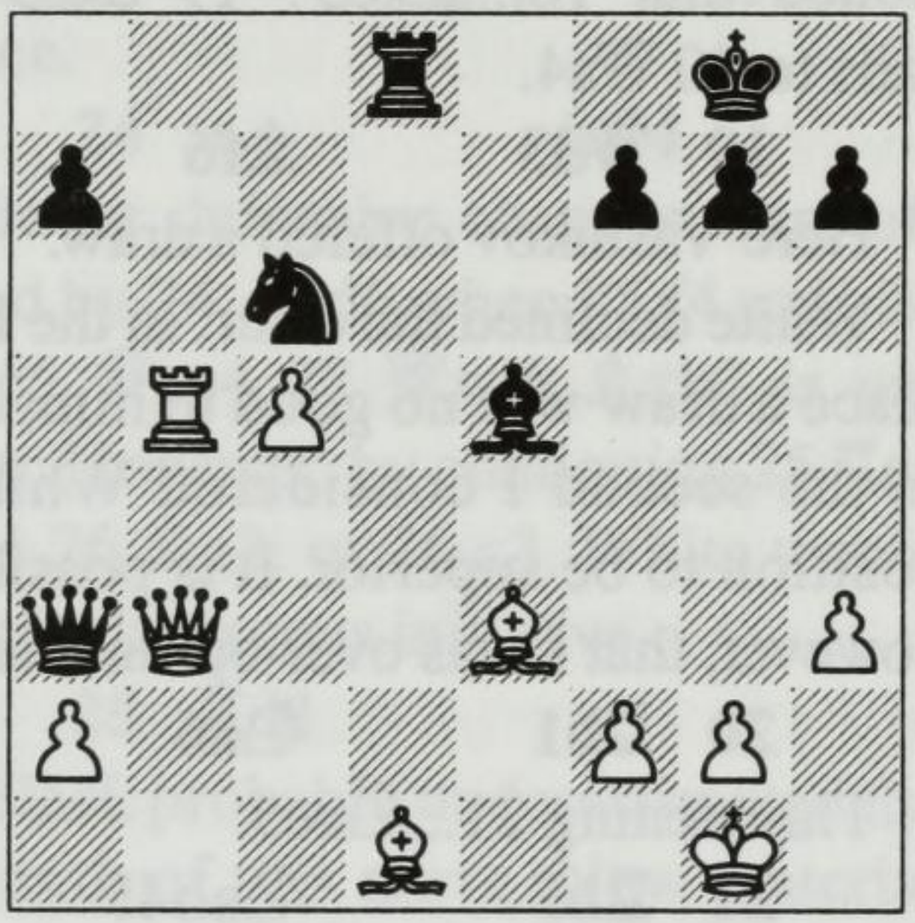
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **22** | **♕d2** | **♕a3** |

An assessment of this position depends on which is more important: the bad position of the queen on a3 or that of the rook on b5. The immediate attempt to exploit the queen's position

by 23 ♘b1 is unsuccessful, since after 23...♕xa2 24 ♖xb4 ♕xd2 25 ♗xd2 ♘xb4 26 ♗xb4 Black has the move 26...♖b8. With his next move, White plans to transfer his bishop to b3, which will straight away make Black's position difficult. The one drawback to White's move is the lifting of the pressure from d5, which Vasiukov exploits without delay.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **23** | **♗d1** | **e5** |
| **24** | **dxe5** | **♗xe5** |
| **25** | **♘xd5** | **♘xd5** |
| **26** | **♕xd5** | **♖d8** |
| **27** | **♕b3** *(D)* | |

*B*



In my preliminary calculations I had been most afraid of the exchange sacrifice 27...♖d3 28 ♕c2 ♖xe3 29 fxe3 ♕xe3+ 30 ♕f2 ♕d3 or 30...♕c1. As a rule, the presence of opposite-coloured bishops favours the side which holds the initiative in the middlegame. Since I could not find an effective continuation of the attack for Black, for example, 30...♕d3 31 ♗e2 ♕c2 32 ♔h1 when White also begins to attack, and since in any case I was forced to go in for this variation if I wanted to fight for an advantage, there was no point in being afraid.

27...♕xa2! was probably sufficient for a draw. I was intending to reply 28 ♗f3 ♕xb3 29 ♖xb3 ♘d4, and here White has a choice between exchanging on d4, or else continuing 30 ♖b7 ♘xf3+ 31 gxf3. In both cases White has the advantage, but I do not consider that it is very significant.

After the game Vasiukov said that at this moment he thought that he had a winning position (in his calculations he probably underestimated White's 30th move).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **27** | **...** | **♘a5** |
| **28** | **♕c2** | **♘c4** |

Perhaps the decisive mistake, although the move appears very threatening. Here also 28...♕xa2 was strong, although after 29 ♗g5 ♖d5 30 g4 the two active bishops would have given White quite good prospects in the ending.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **29** | **♗g5!** | **♕c3** |
| **30** | **♔f1** | |

Sometimes such a move is possible even in the middlegame. Black cannot play 30...♘a3 31 ♕xc3 ♖xd1+ 32 ♔e2, since he has no time to capture both pieces.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **30** | **...** | **f6** |
| **31** | **♕xc3** | **♗xc3** |
| **32** | **♗b3** | **fxg5** |
| **33** | **c6** | **♔f8** |

This loses immediately, but even after 33...♖c8 34 ♖c5 ♔f8 35 ♖xc4

♗f6 36 ♗d1 followed by ♗g4, White's win is merely a question of time and technique.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **34** | **c7** | **♖e8** |
| **35** | **♖b8** | **♘b6** |
| **36** | **♗a4** | **♖c8** |
| **37** | **♗d7** | **♗e5** |
| **38** | **♗xc8** | **♗xc7** |
| **39** | **♖b7** | **♗e5** |
| **40** | **♖xa7** | **1-0** |

Game 75

**Tal – Donner**

*Wijk aan Zee 1968*

French Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **e6** |
| **2** | **d4** | **d5** |
| **3** | **♘c3** | **♗b4** |
| **4** | **e5** | **c5** |
| **5** | **a3** | **♗xc3+** |
| **6** | **bxc3** | **♕c7** |
| **7** | **♘f3** | |

The most critical move here is considered to be 7 ♕g4 but I wanted, in the first place, to avoid a possible surprise in one of the forced variations, and, in the second, to test myself in positions of a completely different type.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **7** | **...** | **b6** |

Normally 7...♘e7 is played first. The idea of the move in the game is understandable: Black aims immediately to exchange off his light-squared bishop, which is often a burden in the French Defence, for its active opponent. But can't the fact that Black's kingside is undeveloped be exploited?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **8** | **a4** | **♗a6** |
| **9** | **♗xa6** | **♘xa6** |
| **10** | **♕e2** | |

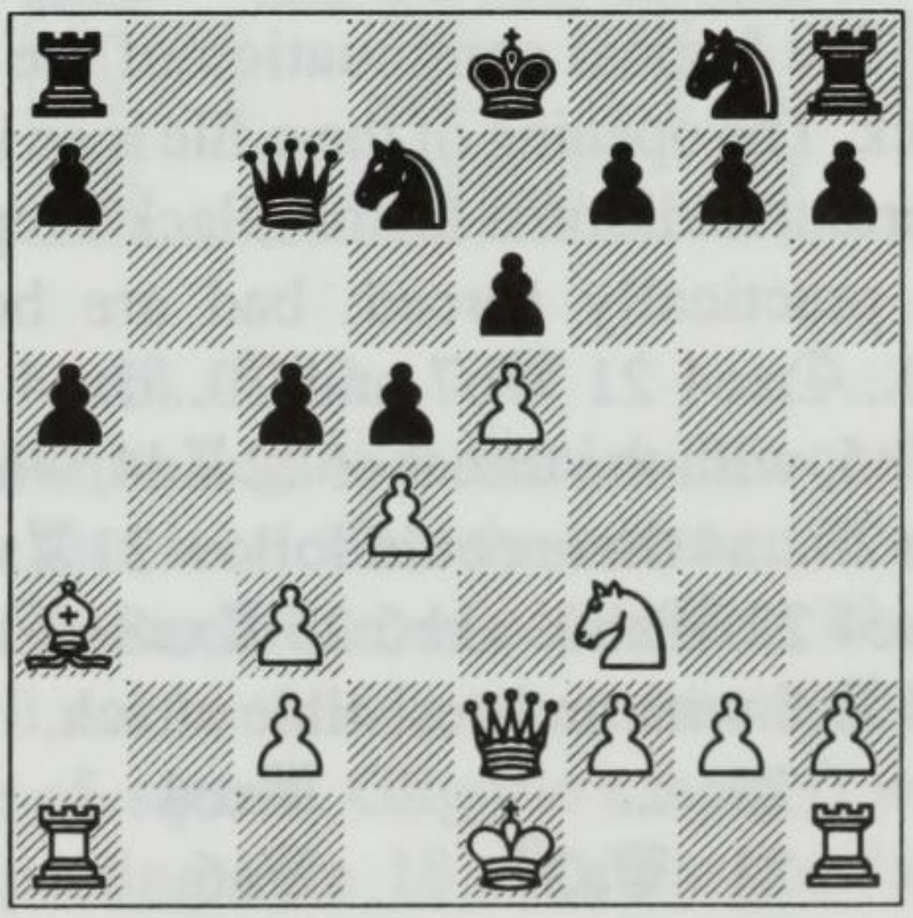
This forces the knight back, since on 10...♕c8, 11 ♕b5+ is highly unpleasant. The tactical attempt 10...cxd4 fails because of the same queen check: 11 ♕b5+ ♔d8 (or 11...♔f8 12 ♗a3+) 12 ♕xa6 ♕xc3+ 13 ♔e2, and the rook is invulnerable.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **10** | **...** | **♘b8** |
| **11** | **a5** | **bxa5** |
| **12** | **♗a3** | |

The *leit-motif* of the whole game is the battle to activate this bishop. From this point of view the following natural move by Donner ...

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | **...** | **♘d7** *(D)* |

... must be criticised, as Black does not succeed in blocking the a3-f8 diagonal. Much stronger was 12...♘e7! with ...♘d7 only in reply to 13 ♗xc5. In this case it could be considered that Donner's opening idea had justified itself.




| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **13** | **dxc5** | **♘e7** |

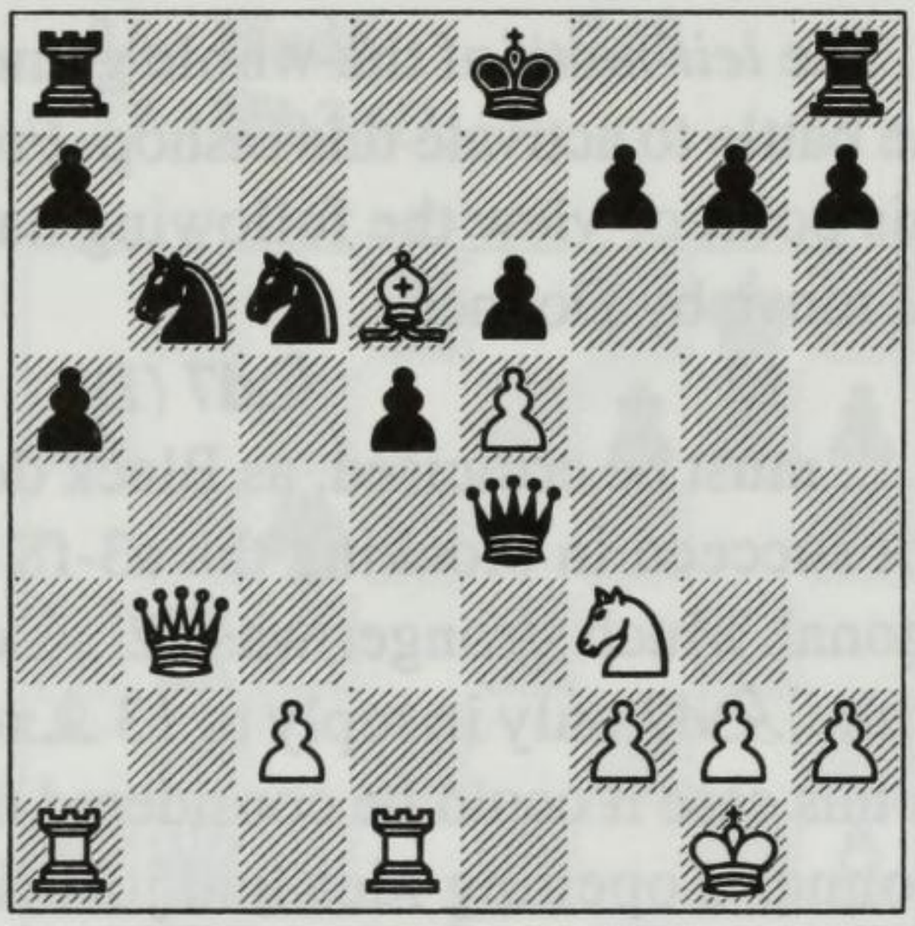
**14 c6! ♕xc6**
**15 0-0 ♕xc3**

Played not so much with the aim of increasing his material advantage, as to prevent the intrusion of the white knight.

**16 ♖fd1 ♘c6**

More accurate, perhaps, was the preparatory 16...♕c4.

**17 ♗d6 ♕c4**
**18 ♕e3 ♕e4**
**19 ♕b3 ♘b6** *(D)*

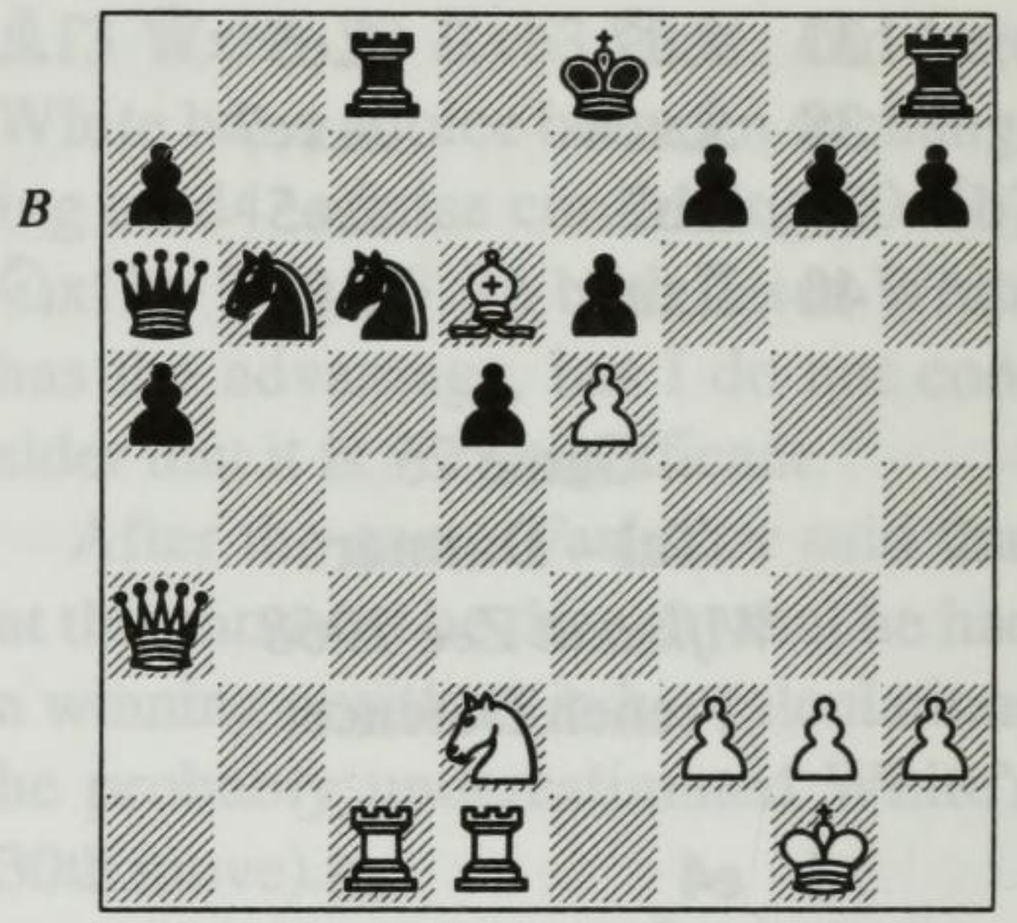



**20 c4!**

The logical continuation of the attack. The opening of the c-file is an important additional factor. Black's reply is practically forced: bad are both 20...♘xc4 21 ♕b7 and 20...dxc4 21 ♕b5, with the threat of 22 ♖d4, while on 20...a4 there could follow 21 ♖xa4 dxc4 22 ♕xb6! axb6 23 ♖xa8+ ♘d8 24 ♖c8 with an irresistible attack.

**20 ... ♕xc4**
**21 ♕a3 ♕a6**
**22 ♖ac1 ♖c8**
**23 ♘d2!** *(D)*

White prevents the intrusion of the enemy knight on c4, prepares the analogous manoeuvre ♘b3-c5, and frees the third rank for his queen. Can one ask more of one move?




**23 ... f6**

During the game I thought that strongest here was 23...♘d4 to which I intended replying simply 24 ♔h1 ♘f5 25 ♗c5. The Dutch Grandmaster was afraid of a different continuation: 24 ♖xc8+ ♕xc8 25 ♕xa5.

**24 exf6 gxf6**
**25 ♕f3 ♔d7**

Rather more stubborn was 25...♘d7 after which it is not so easy for White to carry through his attack, whereas now Black loses quickly.

**26 ♕xf6 ♖he8**

26...♔xd6 loses to 27 ♘e4+ ♔c7 28 ♘c5 ♕e2 29 ♕g7+ ♔d6 30 ♘b7 mate.

**27 ♘e4 ♘e7**
**28 ♘c5+**

Winning the exchange does not weaken White's attack.

**28 ... ♖xc5**
**29 ♗xc5 ♘c4**
**30 ♗xe7 1-0**

On 30...♖xe7, 31 ♖xd5+ is decisive.

Game 76

**Tal – Gligorić**

*Candidates Match (9), Belgrade 1968*

Ruy Lopez

**1 e4 e5**
**2 ♘f3 ♘c6**
**3 ♗b5 a6**
**4 ♗a4 ♘f6**
**5 0-0 ♗e7**
**6 ♖e1 b5**
**7 ♗b3 d6**
**8 c3 0-0**
**9 h3 h6**
**10 d4 ♖e8**
**11 ♘bd2 ♗f8**
**12 ♘f1 ♗b7**
**13 ♘g3 ♘a5**
**14 ♗c2 ♘c4**
**15 ♗d3**

A few days earlier in Amsterdam, Korchnoi, in one of his games with Reshevsky, had opened a new page in the handling of this variation. For the moment White simply aims to complete the mobilisation of his forces.

**15 ... ♘b6**
**16 ♗d2**

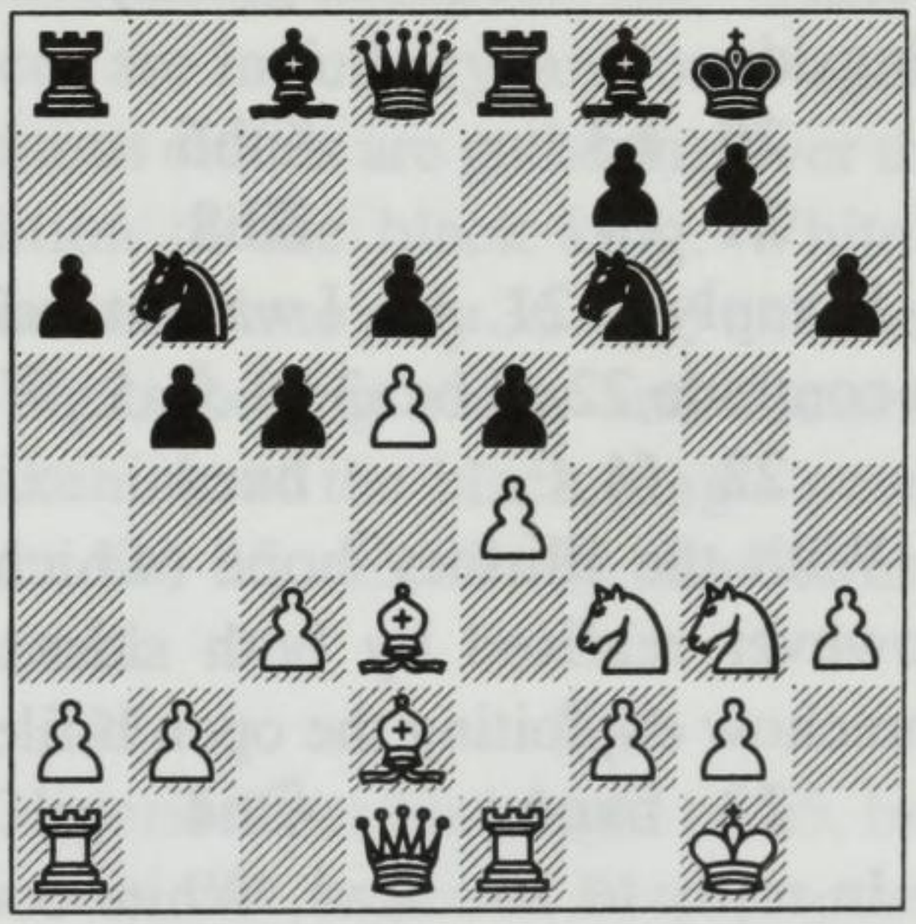
Now Black is faced with a far from simple problem: that of choosing the most expedient plan. Gligorić, like Reshevsky, played ...

**16 ... c5**

In my opinion, Black should not have made this advance so soon, as it allows White to block the centre. 16...♘bd7 was worth considering, meeting 17 a4 by 17...c6 with a somewhat passive position, but one that is not without counterchances. There would still be the possibility of effecting the advance ...d5.

**17 d5 ♗c8** *(D)*

Of course, in the resulting pawn configuration there is nothing for the bishop to do on b7. In the game mentioned earlier, Reshevsky played very badly: 17...♘a4? 18 ♖b1 c4? and after 19 ♗xc4 the game was essentially over.



*W*

**18 ♘h2**

White begins to disclose his cards: his plan is to effect the advance f4 under the condition, of course, that Black will not be able to take possession of the e5-square. Gligoric's reply (I was expecting here 18...♘h7 or the 'abstract' 18...♖a7) makes one think that some sort of telepathy was involved.

**18 ... ♘a4**
**19 ♖b1**

My opponent had thought for about half an hour over his previous move. Here he stretched out his hand towards his c-pawn, then withdrew it and thought again. After 19...c4 20 ♗xc4 ♘xb2 21 ♖xb2 bxc4 22 ♕e2 ♗d7, White does not have to capture the c-pawn, which allows the opponent counterplay, but can simply continue 23 ♖eb1. Even so, Black should either have played this, or else courageously retreated by 19...♘b6, since after the move played ...

**19 ... ♗d7**

... White 'kills' the queenside, and transfers the centre of gravity to the kingside.

**20 b3 ♘b6**
**21 c4 ♖b8**

In reply to 21...b4, I was intending to continue 22 a4 bxa3 23 ♗a5.

**22 f4 bxc4**

With the illusory hope (which is however realised by both sides) of somehow exploiting the open b-file.

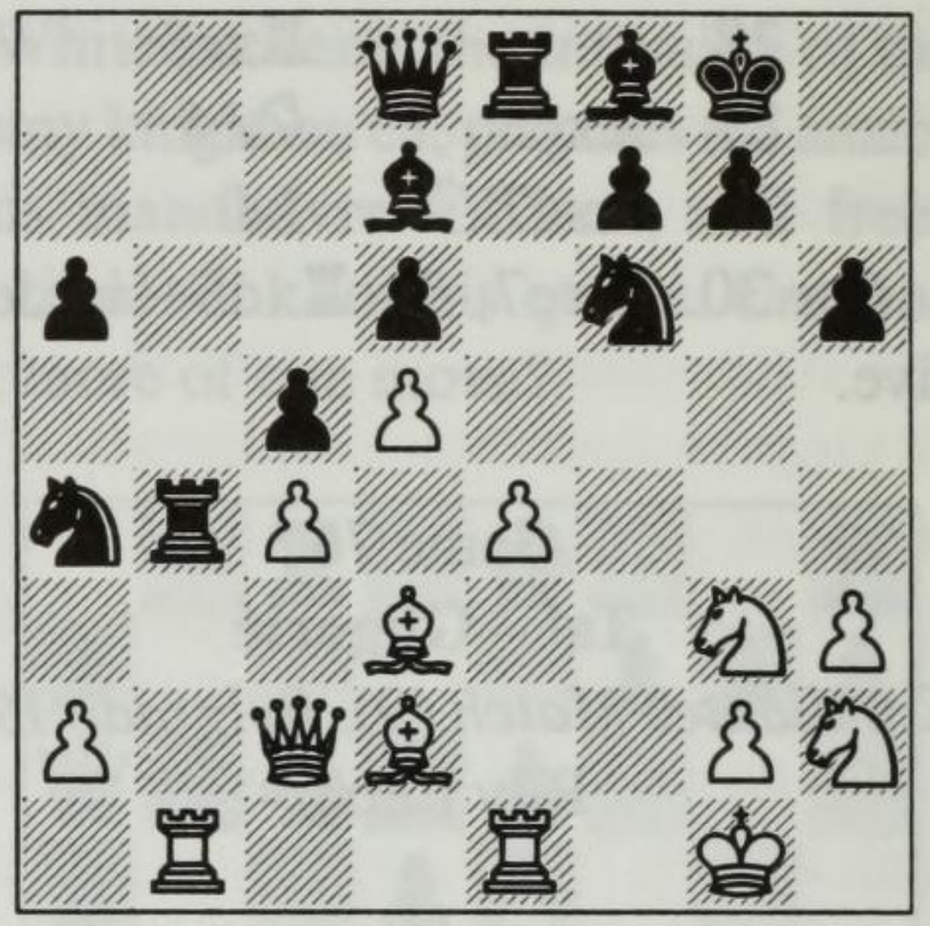
**23 bxc4 ♘a4**

In reply to 23...♗a4, White could choose between the classical 24 ♗c2, exchanging his bad bishop, and 24 ♕c1, with the additional threat of 25 ♗a5.

**24 ♕c2**

24 fxe5 first was also good.

**24 ... exf4**
**25 ♗xf4 ♖b4**
**26 ♗d2** *(D)*




A significant inaccuracy, which greatly complicates White's task. I avoided the natural move 26 a3 on account of the weakening of the b3-square, though to this day I cannot see what significance this would have had. Twice I wrote down on my scoresheet the move 26 ♘f3, but in this case I did not like the consequences of the reply 26...♕b6, when in answer to 27 ♗d2 the exchange sacrifice 27...♖b8 is not unfavourable to Black; in comparison with the game he gains several tempi. Also on 27 a3, Black could continue 27...♖b2! 28 ♖xb2 ♕xb2 29 ♖b1 ♕xc2 30 ♗xc2 ♘c3. White therefore decided to improve on this variation, reckoning only on 26...♕b6 27 a3 ♖b2 28 ♖xb2 ♕xb2 29 ♖b1 ♕e5 (29...♕xa3? 30 ♘e2 and 31 ♗c1) 30 ♗e1 and 31 ♘f3.

Gligoric's excellent reply came as a complete surprise to me.

**26 ... ♕c7!**

27 a3 is now too late in view of 27...♖xb1 28 ♖xb1 ♖b8. I first wrote down 27 ♖b3 but again after 27...♖xb3 28 axb3 ♘b6 Black's position is defensible. After lengthy consideration,

White all the same decided to accept the sacrifice offered, having in principle planned the following regrouping. In any case, although Gligorić was not successful with his exchange sacrifice, it was without doubt the best chance after his badly played opening.

**27 ♗xb4 cxb4**
**28 ♖f1**

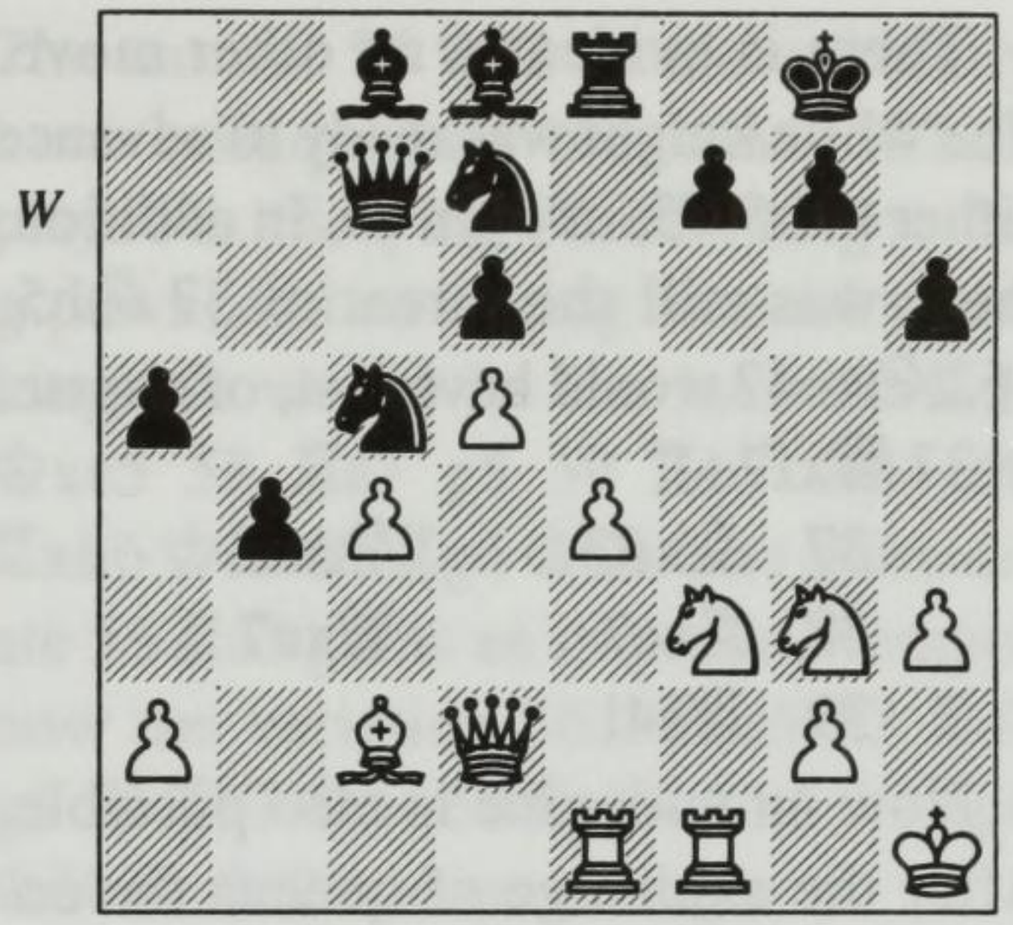
Threatening, should the opportunity arise, an answering exchange sacrifice, with a subsequent intrusion by a knight on h5.

**28 ... ♗e7**
**29 ♔h1 a5**
**30 ♕d2!**

A considerable amount of time was spent on searching for a continuation of the attack after 30 e5 dxe5 31 ♘e4 ♘xe4 32 ♗xe4 ♖f8, until I realised that there might not be one. Of course, White does not give up the idea of making this breakthrough (it is the one possibility of fully activating his forces) but first wishes to arrange his pieces in the best possible way. A not insignificant role is to be allotted to the light-squared bishop, at present inactive, and for this reason White avoids its exchange. The following moves are easy to understand: the struggle is for the e5-square.

**30 ... ♘c5**
**31 ♗c2 ♗d8**
**32 ♖be1 ♗c8**
**33 ♘f3 ♘fd7** *(D)*

Black has only to make one more move, 34...♗f6, and his position will become impregnable, but it is White's




turn to move and he finally carries out his carefully prepared advance.

**34 e5! ♘xe5**
**35 ♕f4**

The character of the position has immediately changed. All White's pieces are in full cry, and once again ominous clouds are gathering over the position of the black king. White's main threat is to play 36 ♘h5 and then 37 ♕g3, forcing a new and decisive weakening of the black king's pawn cover. On 35...♘cd7, 36 ♗a4 is unpleasant.

**35 ... ♖e7**

Gligorić frees his knight on e5, but this does not improve Black's position.

**36 ♘d4**

36 ♘h5 was also possible, but at the last moment I rejected it because of 36...♘g6 when Black returns the pawn to liquidate the reactivated white bishop. In making my move, I had in mind the position after move 40, which is apparently reached by force.

**36 ... ♘ed3**

There is evidently no other move. The white knight was ready to advance either to b5, f5, or even c6. In addition, there was still the threat of 37 ♘h5. 36...♘xc4? would have lost, of course, to 37 ♕xf7+!

**37 ♗xd3 ♘xd3**
**38 ♖xe7 ♕xe7**
**39 ♕e4!**

Now an endgame is also possible. After the exchange of queens the active position of the white cavalry would quickly lead to material gains.

**39 ... ♘e5**
**40 ♘c6!**

This is the point. Black has nothing better than ...

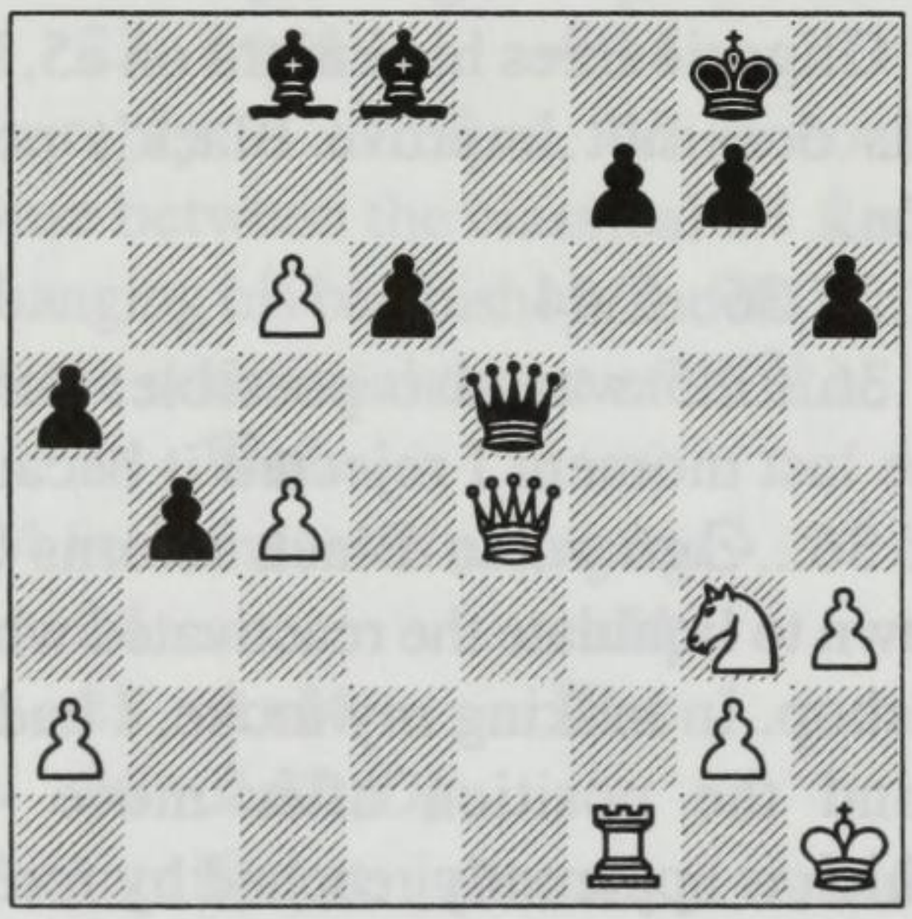
**40 ... ♘xc6**

... since 40...♕g5 is bad in view of 41 ♘xd8 ♕xd8 (41...♕xg3 42 ♘xf7 ♗xh3 43 ♘xe5) 42 c5!, but after ...

**41 dxc6**

... White's additional trump – a powerful passed pawn – decides the game.

**41 ... ♕e5** *(D)*



The best chance. All other moves would have allowed White to win without difficulty.

Here the game was adjourned. At first it seemed to us that White should win just as he pleased, but in the course of the analysis it became clear that I was faced with considerable technical difficulties.

**42 ♕xe5**

The sealed move.

**42 ... dxe5**
**43 ♖d1**

White could have come out a rook ahead by 43 ♘f5 ♔f8 44 ♘d6 ♗e6 45 ♘b5 ♗xc4 46 ♖d1 ♗b6 47 c7 but the ending after 47...♗xc7 48 ♘xc7 ♗xa2 turns out to be not all simple. The white knight has no way of coming into play, and Black rapidly activates his king.

**43 ... ♗c7**
**44 ♘e4 ♔f8**
**45 ♘d6!**

45 c5 was very tempting, and appeared to lead to a quick win in all variations, but in the morning Koblents and I discovered a cunning rejoinder: 45...♗f5! 46 ♘d6 ♗c2 47 ♖f1 (47 ♖d2 ♗a4) 47...f6 and if 48 ♘b5 then 48...♗d3 49 ♖d1 ♗xb5 50 ♖d7 ♗b8! 51 c7 ♗xc7 52 ♖xc7 ♗c4 and again Black has real counterplay.

In the end we decided on a technical solution to the position.

**45 ... ♗xd6**
**46 ♖xd6 ♔e7**
**47 ♖d5 a4**
**48 c7!**

It soon becomes clear that this move is essential.

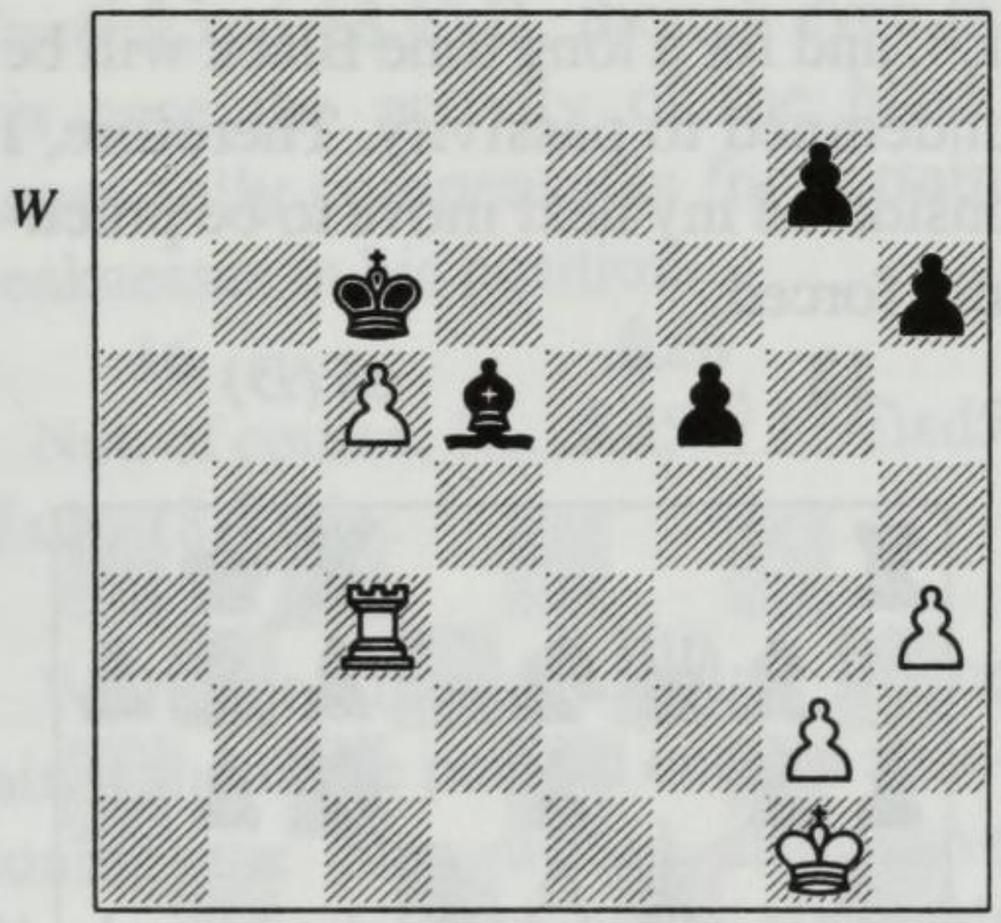
**48 ... b3**
**49 axb3 axb3**
**50 ♖xe5+ ♔d6**
**51 ♖b5 ♔xc7**
**52 ♖xb3**

Now the point of White's 48th move becomes clear. If Black had been able to capture the pawn at c6 (instead of c7), he would have continued 52...♗e6 in this position, with a probable draw. Now, however, White keeps his c-pawn.

**52 ... ♔c6**
**53 c5 ♗e6**
**54 ♖c3 ♗d5**

Black is unable to prevent the advance of White's king to the centre.

**55 ♔g1 f5** *(D)*




**56 ♖a3!**

It is interesting that up to this point the two players, armed with their adjournment analysis, had played extremely rapidly. Only after this 56th move did Gligorić sink into thought. The natural 56 ♔f2 would evidently have relinquished the win – Black plays 56...f4, tying White's king to the g-pawn, and switching the rook to the kingside would be too late: 57 ♖a3 ♔xc5 58 ♖a7 g5 59 ♖h7 ♔d4 60 ♖xh6 ♔e5 61 ♖g6 ♔f5. The immediate 56 ♖a3 gains an important tempo; now the variation 56...♔xc5 57 ♖a7 g5 58 ♖h7 ♔d4 59 ♖xh6 ♔e5 60 ♖g6 ♔f4 61 ♔f2 is clear enough.

**56 ... ♔b7**

Black prevents the rook's intrusion, but the remoteness of the black king gives rise to new motifs.

**57 ♖g3!**

On the immediate 57 ♖e3, Black would have replied 57...♗e4.

**57 ... g5**
**58 ♖e3 ♔c6**

A sad necessity. On 58...♗e4, White switches to an easily won pawn ending: 59 ♖xe4! fxe4 60 ♔f2 ♔c6 61 ♔e3 ♔d5 62 c6 and White's king wins the black h-pawn. The rest is simple:

**59 ♖e7 ♔xc5**
**60 ♖h7 g4**
**61 hxg4 fxg4**
**62 ♖xh6 ♗b7**
**63 ♖g6 1-0**

## Game 77

**Khermlin – Tal**

*USSR Team Championship, Riga 1968*

Benoni Defence

**1 d4 ♘f6**
**2 ♘f3 c5**

**3 d5**

The Estonian Champion readily goes in for a full-blooded encounter: the move played is without doubt the strongest.

**3 ... g6**

Modern theory considers 3...b5 to be perfectly feasible. I avoided this move, for the following reason: not long before the Team Championship the Estonian master Kyarner, who was taking part in the Championship of the Latvian Central Chess Club, came into the editorial office of *Sahs*. He showed us his game with Katalimov, in which this variation occurred: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 c5 3 d5 b5. After some interesting play, the game was won by White.

In considering my third move, I used the detective methods of Sherlock Holmes, who could have been an excellent chess player. My thoughts went essentially as follows: Kyarner and Khermlin play in the same team, Kyarner has no doubt shown his team colleagues the game, the game may have been studied in detail.

**4 ♘c3**

White avoids 4 c4, after which a normal variation of the King's Indian Defence would have been reached, and intends in the future to use the c4-square for his king's knight.

**4 ... ♗g7**
**5 e4 d6**
**6 ♗b5+**

This continuation is not at all bad, and, in my opinion, is in no way inferior to the traditional 6 ♗e2 0-0 7 0-0 ♘a6, etc. The exchange of the light-squared bishops is, from general considerations, favourable for White.

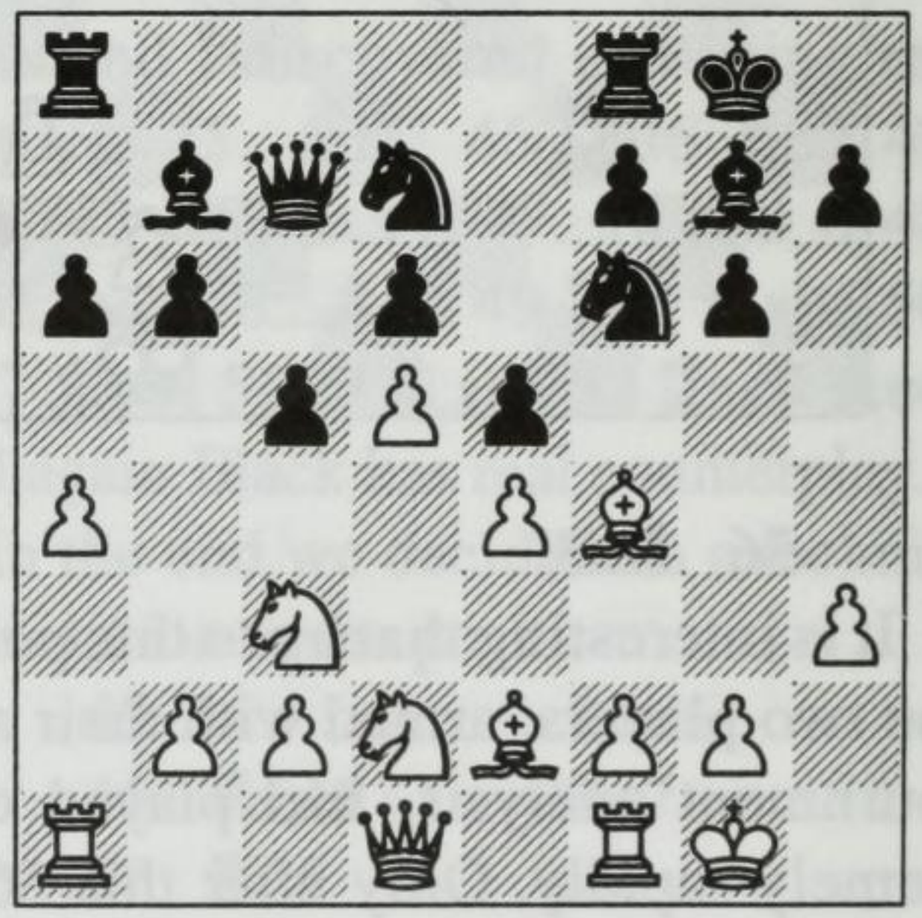
**6 ... ♘bd7**
**7 a4 0-0**
**8 0-0 a6**
**9 ♗e2**

The point is that the usual plan for Black in such positions is to transfer his queen's knight to c7, from where it supports the intended ...b5, while the pressure on White's d-pawn hinders his central breakthrough. Now this manoeuvre is impossible, and it is not easy for the black pieces to find their proper places.

**9 ... ♕c7**
**10 h3 b6**
**11 ♗f4 ♗b7**
**12 ♘d2**

It only remains for White to play 13 ♘c4, and for a long time Black will be condemned to passivity. Therefore, I considered my next move to be practically forced.

**12 ... e5** *(D)*



**13 dxe6**

In my opinion this is a fundamental mistake, which allows Black to deploy his forces successfully. He should have played 13 ♗e3 with the possible variation 13...♘e8 14 ♘c4 f5 15 exf5 gxf5 16 f4, when White has good prospects.

**13 ... fxe6**
**14 ♘c4**

White agrees to part with his dark-squared bishop. On 14 ♗h2 I was intending to reply 14...♕c6, so as to carry out the advance ...d5.

**14 ... ♘xe4**
**15 ♗xd6 ♘xd6**
**16 ♘xd6**

After this move, which leads, it is true, to the win of Black's e-pawn, White finds himself in a difficult position. Better was 16 ♕xd6 ♕c6 17 ♕xc6 ♗xc6 18 ♘d1, though even in this case the activity of the black pieces fully compensates for certain weaknesses in his position.

**16 ... ♗c6**

Not, of course, 16...♗d5?? 17 ♘xd5 ♕xd6 18 ♘f6+.

**17 ♗c4**

White continues his plan. To be fair, it should be pointed out that abandoning the plan would also leave Black with the advantage since his pieces are already very active.

**17 ... ♗d4**

Nothing concrete would have been achieved by 17...♘e5 18 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 19 ♘de4!, when White erects a bastion in the path of the opponent's light-squared bishop. In this variation 19 f4 ♘f3+! is bad.

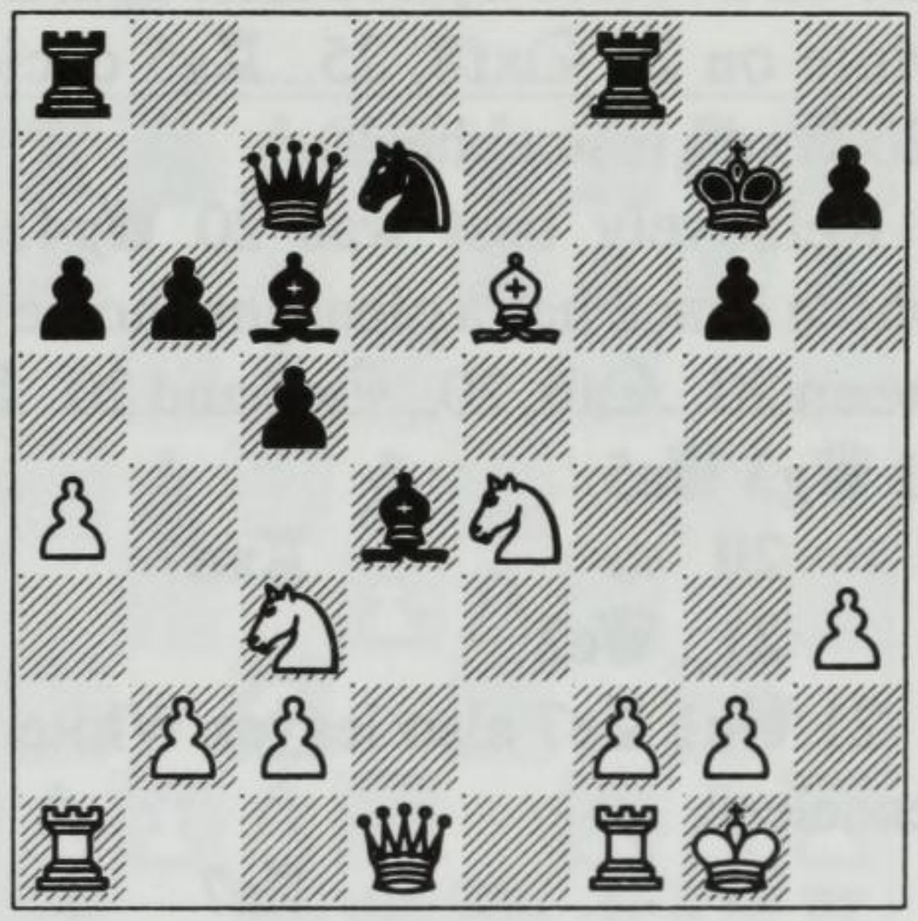
**18 ♗xe6+ ♔g7**

In general, 18...♔h8 was 'correct', since on g7 the king may prove more vulnerable: in some variations a rook may suddenly give check on e7 and even more terrible is a knight check on e6 (the reader can soon see that this is not mere fantasy). Unfortunately, however, I noticed (in reply to 18...♔h8) an ingenious possibility: 19 ♘f7+ ♔g7 20 ♘d5!

**19 ♘de4** *(D)*

On 19 ♘c4 White was rightly afraid of 19...♖xf2 20 ♖xf2 ♖f8.

*B*



**19 ... ♖ad8!**

Black consolidates his large advantage with this quiet move , whereas the direct 19...♘f6 20 ♘xf6 ♖xf6 21 ♘d5 or 19...♖ae8 20 ♗d5 ♗xd5 21 ♘xd5 ♕c6 22 ♘dc3! (when 22...♖xe4 23 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 fails to 24 c3) would have significantly slowed his attack.

It was not at all easy to decide on the continuation in the game because

of that same possibility of ♘e6+ (I did not want to place yet another piece 'under the fork').

**20 ♗xd7**

It was not at all easy to meet the threat of 20...♘f6. Thus on 20 ♕e2, 20...♖de8 would now be very strong.

In my calculations I devoted the greatest attention to the consequences of 20 ♗a2: 20...♘f6 21 ♘g5 (now winning the queen loses for Black after 21...♗xf2+ 22 ♖xf2 ♖xd1+ 23 ♖xd1) 21...♕g3 22 ♘e6+ ♔h8 23 ♘d5. However, even this clever defence does not save White: 23...♗xd5! 24 ♗xd5 ♖xd5! and now either capture on d4 loses a piece after 25...♕d6, while on 25 ♘xf8, 25...♖g5 decides (26 ♕xd4 is not check).

Relatively best was 20 ♕g4, on which Black has a pleasant choice between 20...♘f6, 20...♘e5 and 20...♖f4 21 ♕g3 ♕e5.

**20 ... ♖xd7**

**21 ♕e2**

21 ♕c1 ♖e7 also leaves White defenceless.

**21 ... ♖e7**

Threatening 22...♗xc3.

**22 ♕d3 ♕f4**

**23 ♖ae1 ♖fe8**

Black wins a piece.

**24 ♕f3**

One of the last traps. Now in answer to 24...♕f5 White unexpectedly saves himself by 25 ♘d6, thanks to the position of the king on g7!.

**24 ... g5**

24...♕h4 was also perfectly sufficient.

**25 ♘e2**

The last trap: bad is 25...♕xe4 26 ♘xd4 ♕xe1 27 ♘f5+ ♔h8 28 ♕xc6 ♕xf1+ 29 ♔h2, and it is only Black who can lose[1].

**25 ... ♗xe4**

**0-1**

Game 78

## Tal – Gurgenidze

*USSR Championship, Alma-Ata 1968-9*

Caro-Kann Defence

**'What do you think of the move 3...b5?'**

The Georgian Champion Bukhuti Gurgenidze has for a long time shown himself to be one of the strongest masters in the country. It should be mentioned that in his games, as a rule, the creative element predominates over the practical. Whatever his results in competitions, he plays a number of interesting games, and in practically every tournament he tries out at times dubious, at times even paradoxical ideas, which, however, he upholds with great success. Thus, for instance, against the Sicilian Defence he adopts as White a most unusual set-up, which at first provoked only sceptical smiles from his opponents and from theorists.

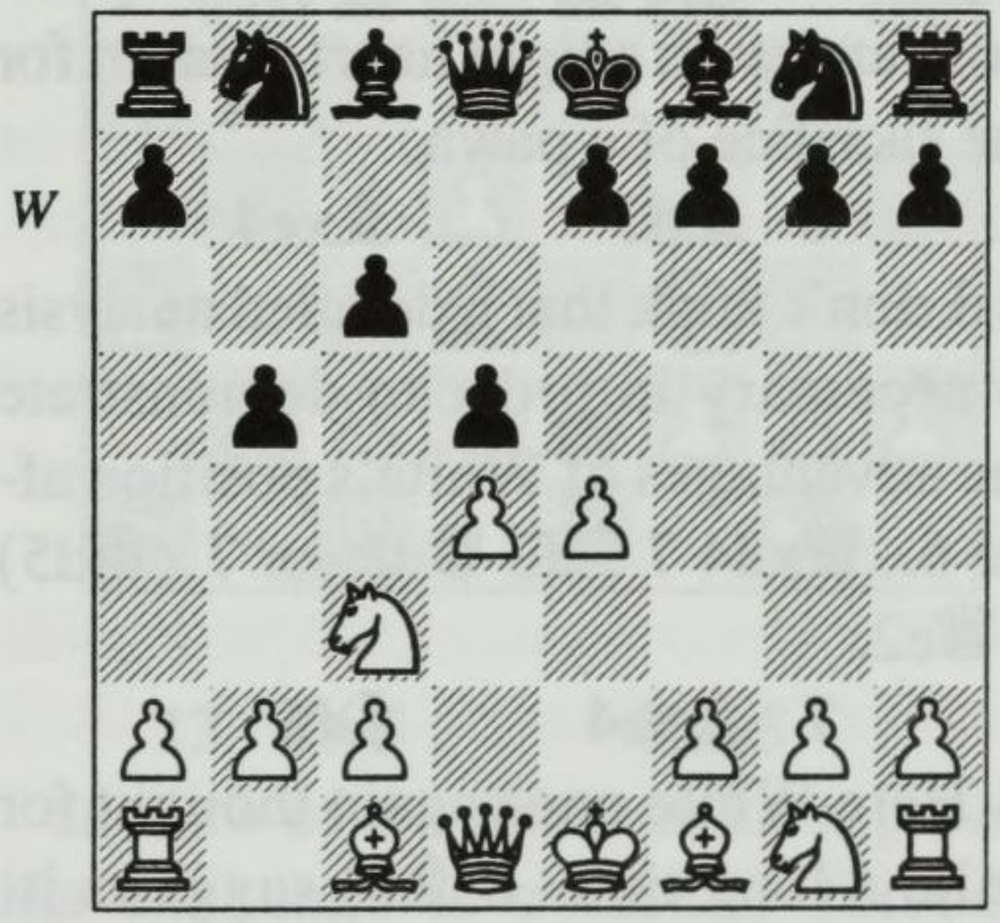
---

1 After 29...♖f8 30 ♘xe7 ♕xf2 Black is the exchange ahead, and certainly cannot lose.

But time has passed, and it seems that not one of a number of strong opponents has succeeded in demonstrating that the Georgian master's point of view is unjustified.

In the USSR Championship at Alma-Ata, Bukhuti Gurgenidze adopted an unusual system in the Caro-Kann Defence. It might appear that this opening has been studied so much in recent years that it is difficult to open any new page in it. Nevertheless, this is not so; in a number of games in the Championship, opening discoveries occurred as early as the third move.

**1 e4 c6**
**2 d4 d5**
**3 ♘c3 b5** *(D)*




**4 a3**

It should be said that the Georgian master adopted the Caro-Kann Defence in this tournament from the very start. This was a rather clever idea, because the opening had never previously been included in his repertoire. Starting with the games in the third and fourth rounds against Vasiukov and Liberzon, Gurgenidze played the Caro-Kann continually. In both of the above-mentioned games the Panov attack occurred, and then at last Igor Zaitsev played 3 ♘c3. To the great astonishment of the spectators, the players, and Gurgenidze's opponent, there followed this outwardly so paradoxical move 3...b5.

Zaitsev, after thinking for quite a long time, played 4 e5 after which the position became blocked. Zaitsev succeeded in obtaining an advantage, but then, in analysis, it seems that Gurgenidze found an improvement for Black (in particular, it is interesting that after 4 e5 he suggests 4...a5).

On the day before the game I was chatting with some Georgian masters, and they half-jokingly asked me 'What do you think of the move 3...b5?' I answered completely honestly: 'I think it's a horrible move.' When in the game I played 1 e4, I thought that Gurgenidze would believe me, but 3...b5 followed nevertheless. After thinking for some 20 minutes over my fourth move, I came to the conclusion that to refute this continuation immediately was not possible.

I also considered 4 ♗d3 b4 5 ♘ce2 dxe4 6 ♗xe4 ♘f6 7 ♗f3 but after 7...g6 a position is reached in which the advance of the b-pawn proves its worth.

**4 ... dxe4**

Now Black heads for one of the normal variations.

**5 ♘xe4 ♗f5**

This move is evidently not bad, but also possible was 5...♘f6 as occurred in the game Klovans-Gurgenidze a few days later. After 6 ♘xf6+ exf6 Black tried to prevent the advance c4 and thus hold back White's queenside pawn majority. Now, after 5...♗f5, if White plays the standard 6 ♘g3 ♗g6 7 ♘f3 ♘d7 then Black's ...b5 appears highly logical, since it begins a struggle for the occupation of the central d5-square; when a knight reaches there it will be no easy matter for White to drive it away by advancing his c-pawn. White decided to demonstrate that the advance of the b-pawn has significantly weakened Black's position, and with a light heart went in for the sacrifice of a pawn.

**6 ♗d3 ♗xe4**

I don't think that a detailed analysis is necessary in order to demonstrate the advantages of White's position after 6...♕xd4 7 ♘f3 ♕d8 (or 7...♕d5) 8 ♕e2.

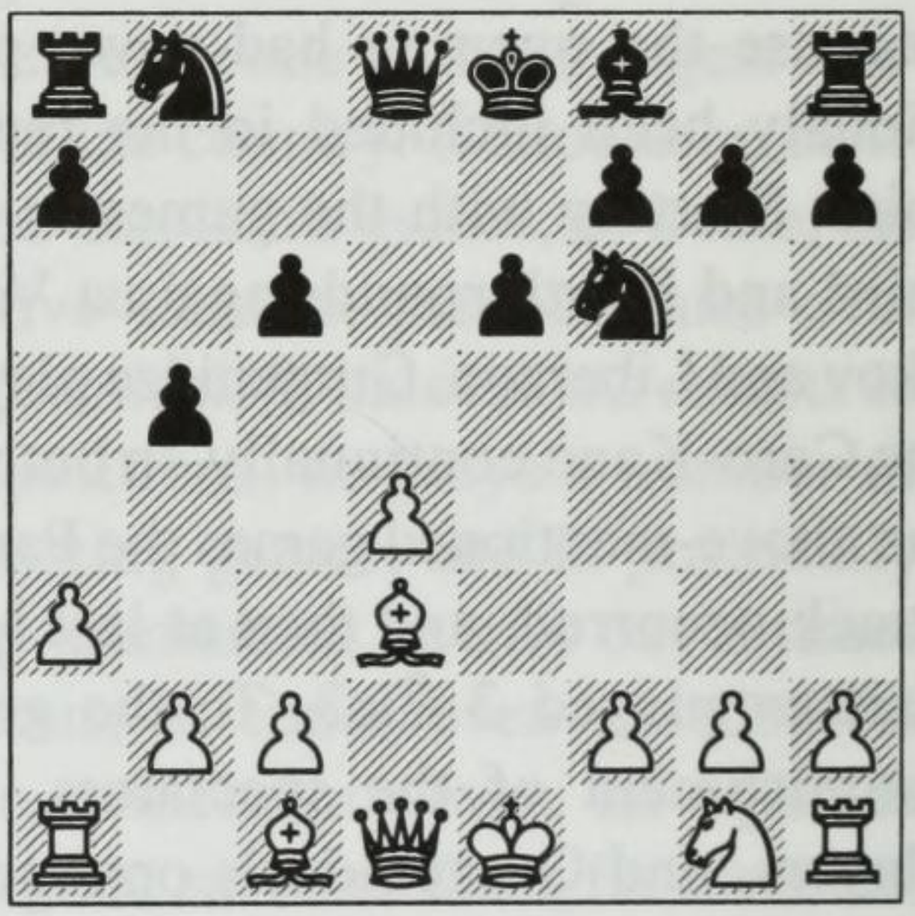
**7 ♗xe4 ♘f6**

Here White once again thought for quite a long time. 8 ♗f3 suggests itself, but after 8...e6 it is not altogether clear how the pieces should be developed. Black will play ...♗d6, ...♕c7, ...0-0 and then at some point prepare the freeing advance ...e5. At the same time the pressure of White's bishop along the long diagonal is not particularly effective, while Black can always reply to a4 with ...b4, thus preventing the opening of lines on the queenside.

**8 ♗d3 e6** *(D)*

But now 8...♕xd4 deserved attention: 9 ♘f3 ♕d8 10 ♕e2 e6. White has the initiative and a good position for the pawn, but it can hardly be said that this is adequate compensation. I must admit the truth: I made the move 8 ♗d3 fairly calmly, since the Georgian master very much dislikes positions in which, for a minimal material advantage, he has to conduct a lengthy, painstaking, and relatively cheerless defence. That's the way it was; after a short reflection Gurgenidze played ...e6. The fianchetto of Black's bishop was also worth considering. In both cases White has a certain advantage, but on the basis of this game one cannot, of course, speak about a refutation of the Georgian master's original system.

*W*



**9 ♘f3 ♗e7**

**10 ♕e2**

For the moment White did not want to determine the position of his king, having not lost hope of castling long,

since the advance of Black's queenside pawns appears fairly harmless. At the last minute he decided against this plan, having decided that in a position with a certain advantage there is no point in falling in with the opponent's intentions of complicating the game. It was more accurate to castle straight away, and in answer to Black's castling play ♖e1. It later becomes clear that 10 ♕e2 loses a tempo.

**10 ... ♘bd7**

Black in turn refrains from determining the position of his king. In reply to 11 ♗d2 he can play 11...♕c7, and on queenside castling by White, send his own king over to the queenside. This variation can be continued: 13 c4 bxc4 14 ♗xc4 ♘b6, and with the d5-square in his hands Black can look to the future with reasonable optimism.

**11 0-0 0-0**

**12 ♖e1**

Here I wanted to play 12 ♘e5 immediately, but refrained from this move because of the continuation 12...♘xe5 13 dxe5 ♘d7, after which Black intends to exchange off White's active bishop by ...♘c5. 14 c3 will not do in view of 14...♘xe5 while in answer to 14 ♖d1 Black quietly plays 14...♕c7, once again threatening to take on e5.

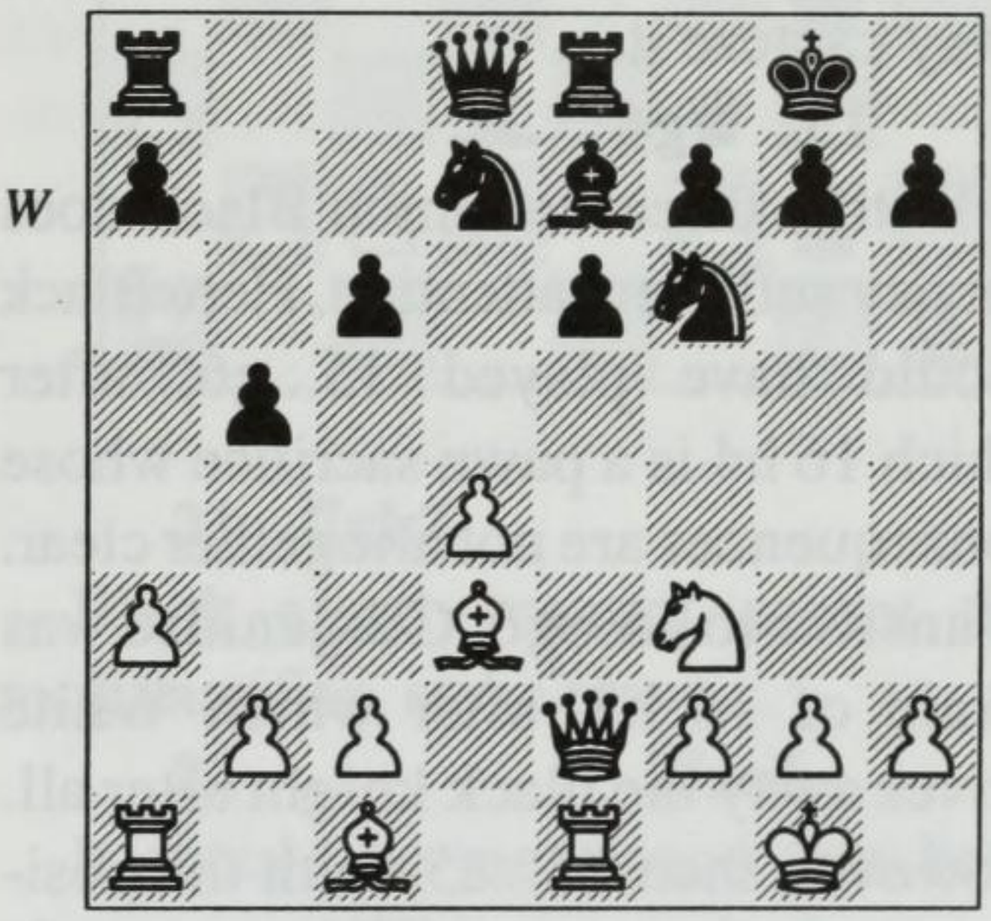
Perhaps even in this case White's position is very slightly preferable, but of course such simplification was not part of my plan.

I thought that Black's strongest move here was 12...♕c7, so as on 13 ♘e5 once again to play 13...♘xe5 14 dxe5 ♘d7, but in this case White has time to play c3, and on ...♘c5 simply retreats his light-squared bishop.

Gurgenidze's 12th move is basically prophylactic in its aims: Black defends the e6- and f7-squares against possible future sacrifices, and vacates the f8-square for one of his minor pieces.

**12 ... ♖e8** *(D)*

Black evidently plans to play ...♘f8. White prevents this.




**13 ♘e5 ♘xe5**

In view of the threat to his c-pawn this exchange is evidently forced, because on 13...♕c7 Black has to reckon with the sacrifice of the knight on f7, while 14 ♗f4 also looks quite strong.

**14 dxe5 ♘d5**

14...♘d7 would be a mistake, since White has the strong continuation 15 ♕e4 winning the c-pawn. After the text, White again spent a long time thinking, since it was difficult to find

the correct plan of attack. Black's main trump is the impregnable position of his knight on d5. This is the logical consequence of the idea initiated by his third move. If White does not succeed in creating any real threats on the kingside, Black will consolidate his knight's post by ...a5 and ...a4, with a completely secure position. However, White has no way of starting a direct attack: on 15 ♕e4 Black replies simply 15...g6 and on 16 ♗h6 he can play 16...♗g5, while if the h-pawn advances then Black can straight away capture it.

**15 ♕g4**

With a threat to which Black does not pay sufficient attention. Here Black should have played 15...g6, after which 16 h4 is a pawn sacrifice whose consequences are not altogether clear. In answer to 15...g6, Gurgenidze was afraid of 16 b3, after which White drives away the black knight after all. However, then 16...a5, with the positional threat of ...a4, looks quite good, since on 17 c4 there follows 17...♘c3, and the somewhat exotic position of the knight, which seriously hinders the activity of the white pieces, cannot be exploited by White. Gurgenidze played the consistent ...

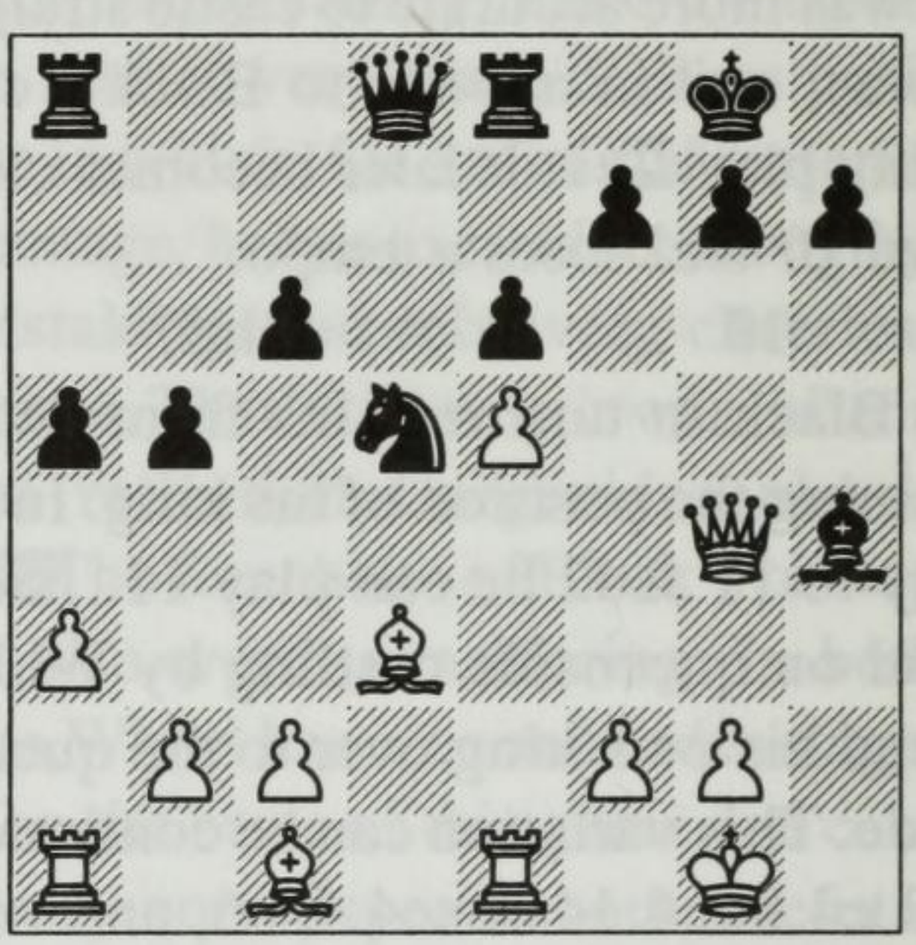
**15 ... a5**

... but this move turns out to be very bad, since with a similar flank diversion (but this time aimed against the king) White obtains a marked advantage.

**16 h4!**

White's plan is relatively simple: he intends to play h5, and then either ♗h6 or h6, forcing a weakening of Black's kingside. Black therefore cannot continue his plan, but must accept the sacrifice.

**16 ... ♗xh4** *(D)*




Now play becomes forced to a considerable extent, and a position for which both players are striving is reached.

**17 g3 ♗e7**

**18 ♔g2 g6**

White's task would perhaps be more difficult after the immediate 18...♗f8 so as to keep in reserve the defensive resource ...f5. Then there would be no point in White playing 19 ♗g5 since Black replies 19...f5 and succeeds in entrenching himself. However, after 18...♗f8 White would still keep a dangerous initiative by continuing 19 ♖h1 f5 (19...g6 leads to the position in the game) 20 ♕h5! h6 21 ♕g6 and the threat of ♖xh6 is very difficult to meet. The move chosen by

Gurgenidze leads to even more unpleasant consequences for Black.

**19 ♖h1**

The threat is relatively transparent: White intends to sacrifice his rook on h7, check with his queen on h5, and then sacrifice another piece on g6, after which his attack is clearly irresistible. This same move (20 ♖xh7) would be the answer to 19...♕c7, for example: 20...♕xe5 (there is no other move; if 20...♔xh7, then 21 ♕h5+ ♔g8 22 ♗xg6 fxg6 23 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 24 ♗d2) 21 ♗xg6 or 21 ♖xf7.

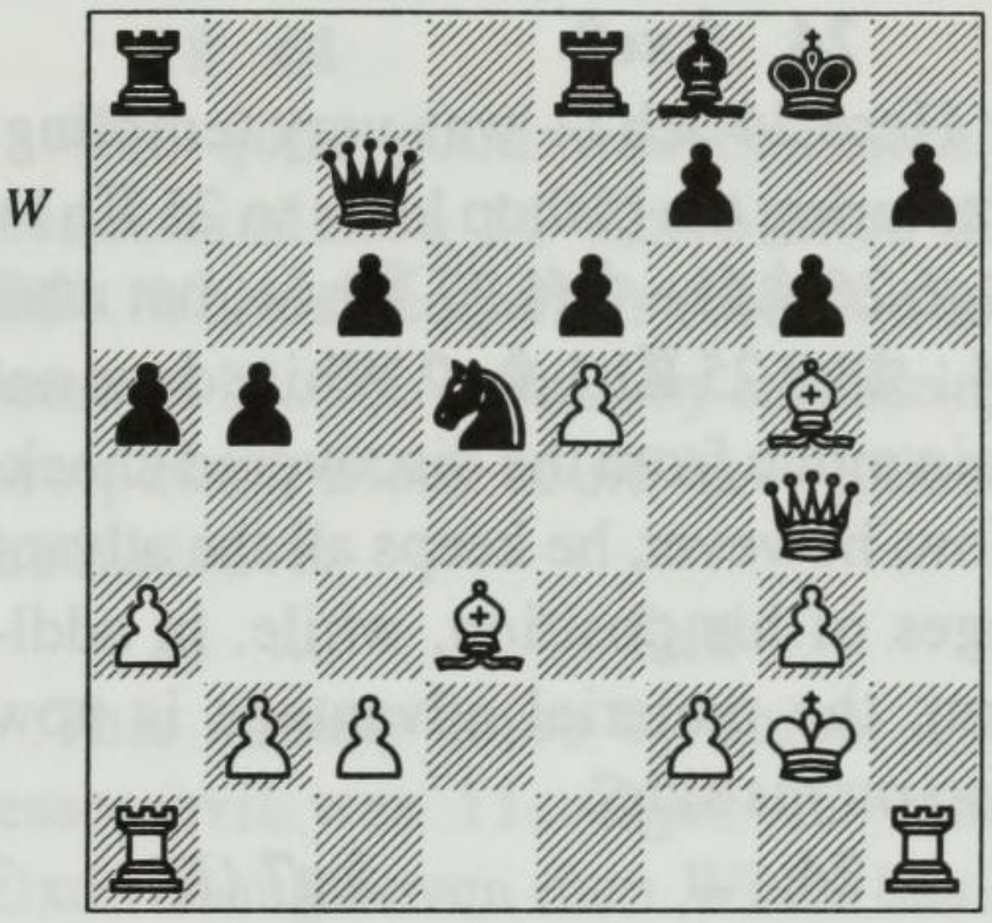
**19 ... ♗f8**

**20 ♗g5!**

This intermediate move is necessary. 20 ♖xh7 ♔xh7 21 ♗g5 completely justifies itself after any move of the queen, or after 21...♗e7 since variations analogous to those given above are reached. However, Black has a clever defence, 21...♘e3+!, and the position becomes unexpectedly complicated, since after 22 fxe3 ♕d5+ 23 ♗e4 ♕xe5 White gets nowhere by 24 ♕h4+ ♔g8 25 ♗f6 ♕h5, while if 25 ♖h1 (instead of 25 ♗f6), Black has the defence 25...♗g7. If White plays 22 ♗xe3, then Black can set up defensive barriers by 22...♗g7 23 ♖h1+ ♔g8 24 ♕h3 ♕e7[1].

**20 ... ♕c7** *(D)*

In answer to 20...♗e7 White wins by 21 ♖xh7! ♗xg5 22 ♖ah1 ♔f8 and now not 23 ♖h8+ ♔e7 24 ♕xg5+ ♔d7 which, however, still leaves White with the advantage, but 23 ♗xg6! with a speedy mating finish. Black could also continue 20...♘e7, but then 21 ♗xg6! hxg6 22 ♗f6 ♗g7 23 ♕h4 is decisive, since mate in a few moves is inevitable.




**21 ♖xh7**

Black clearly cannot accept the rook sacrifice, so he plays ...

**21 ... ♕xe5**

It should be mentioned that both players, and White in particular, were already short of time. I tried to find a mate in the variation 22 ♖ah1. After 22...♗g7 White wins by 23 ♗h6, but capturing the e-pawn has given Black new defensive possibilities, which he exploits by playing 22...f5 23 ♕h3 ♗g7, and it is not clear how White can close in on the enemy king. In reply to 24 ♖h8+ Black can perhaps capture the rook, after which there is no forced

---

1 There is something wrong here as White wins instantly by 25 ♕h7+ ♔f8 26 ♗h6. Instead, 24...♕d5+ and 25...♕xe5 is a reasonable defence.

mate, but it is much simpler for Black to play 24...♔f7 and his king is securely defended by the queen-bishop combination. I was forced to turn to the prosaic.

**22 ♖xf7 ♔xf7**
**23 ♗xg6+ ♔g8**

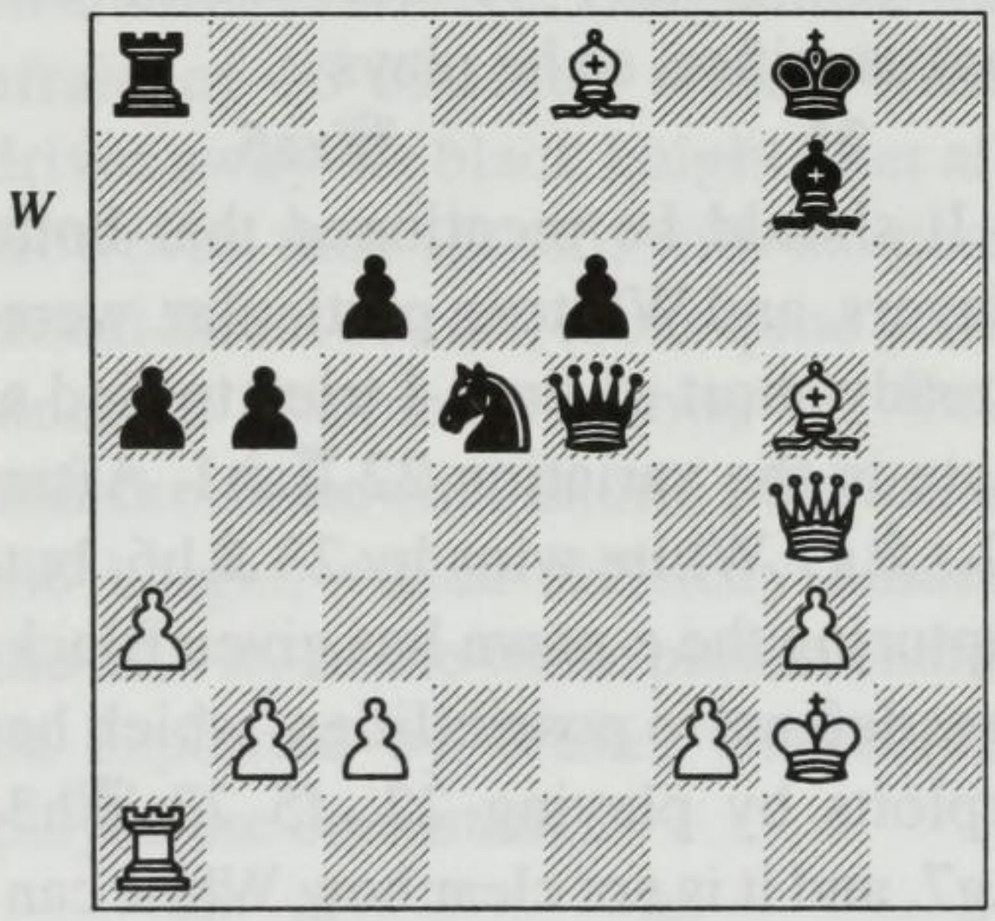
Clearly the only move.

**24 ♗xe8**

Here 24 ♗h7+ was very tempting. Capturing the bishop loses to 25 ♖h1+ ♔g6 26 ♗f4+ ♔f6 27 ♕h4+, but after 24...♔h8 25 ♖h1 ♗g7 White does not gain much from the discovered check. Now, however, he keeps all the advantages of his position, while, in addition, the material advantage is now also on his side.

**24 ... ♗g7** *(D)*

24...♖xe8 clearly loses against 25 ♗f6+.



**25 ♗d7**

Perhaps 25 ♗xc6 also deserved attention, but I thought that the move in the game was the most accurate way to realise my advantage. The point is that the exchanging operation 25...♘e3+ 26 ♗xe3 ♕d5+ 27 ♕f3 ♕xc6 28 ♖d1 leads to a completely hopeless position for Black. In order to defend his e-pawn, Black must play 25...♘c7, whereupon White calmly captures the c-pawn.

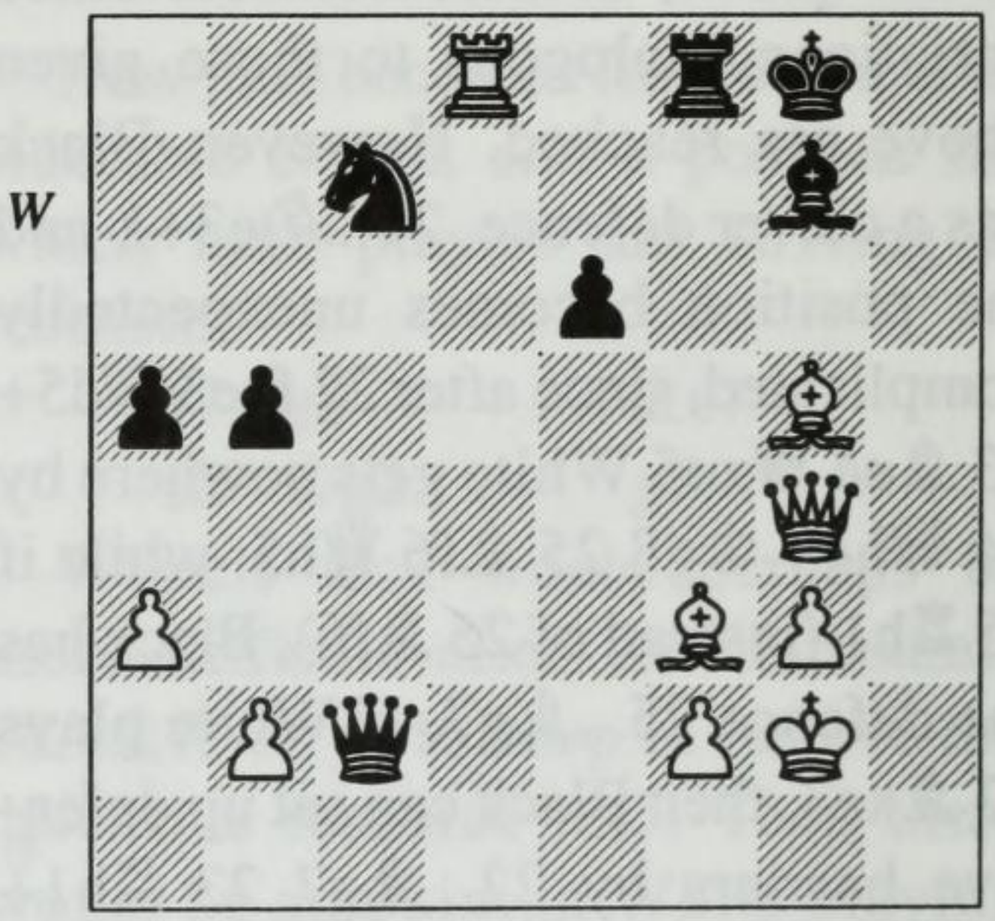
**25 ... ♘c7**
**26 ♗xc6 ♖f8**
**27 ♖d1**

The game is decided. On 27...♕xb2 there follows 28 ♖d7, and on 27...♘d5, 28 ♕xe6+.

**27 ... ♕c5**
**28 ♗f3 ♕xc2**

The second wave of White's attack turns out to be quite irresistible.

**29 ♖d7 ♖f7**
**30 ♖d8+ ♖f8** *(D)*



**31 ♗f6**

I somehow could not deny myself the pleasure of making this pseudo-brilliant move. Black has only one reply.

**31 ... ♕h7**
**32 ♗e4 ♕h6**

Objectively speaking, 32...♕h8 was perhaps slightly stronger, though in this case also White has a wide choice of winning continuations. Probably the simplest is 33 ♕g6. Now the struggle terminates instantly.

**33 ♗g5 ♕h8**
**34 ♖d7 1-0**

Also 'not bad' was 34 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 35 ♕f4+. **Black resigned** as 34...♖f7 loses to 35 ♖xc7.

Game 79

**Tal – A. Zaitsev**

*USSR Championship, Moscow 1969*

French Defence

**1 e4 e6**
**2 d4 d5**
**3 ♘d2 c5**
**4 ♘gf3 ♘c6**
**5 exd5 exd5**
**6 ♗b5 ♕e7+**

A rather old continuation, rehabilitated by Spassky in the 7th game of his match with Geller in 1968, where there followed 7 ♗e2 cxd4 8 0-0 ♕d8 9 ♘b3 ♗d6 10 ♘bxd4 ♘ge7, which also did not relieve Black of his difficulties.

**7 ♗e2 ♕c7**
**8 0-0 cxd4**

This is a matter of taste; I would prefer 8...♘f6. In reply to 8...c4, White could consider 9 b3 b5 10 a4 c3 11 axb5.

**9 ♘b3 ♗d6**

A mistake. His first thought should have been for the safety of his king. After 9...♘f6 10 ♘bxd4 ♗e7 we would reach the characteristic position of this variation.

**10 ♘bxd4 a6**

Played to counter the positional threat of ♘b5. The move is necessary, but now White's superiority becomes ominous.

**11 c4**

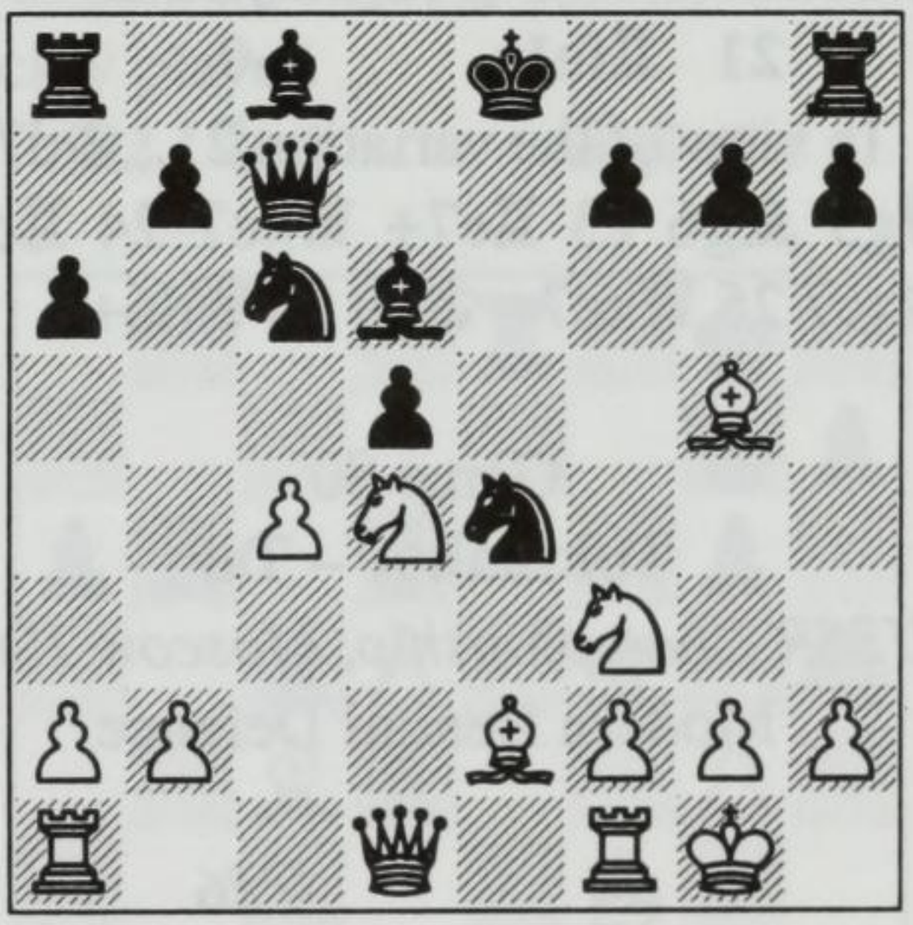
Also quite good was Petrosian's recommendation 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♕d4. White rejected this variation because of 12...♘e7 when, by sacrificing two pawns, Black could have gained the initiative.

**11 ... ♘f6**

This already loses by force. The lesser evil was 11...♘ge7 12 cxd5 ♘xd5 though even then White has a pleasant choice between 13 ♘xc6, 13 ♘b5 and 13 ♗c4.

**12 ♗g5! ♘e4** *(D)*

Black has no choice.




**13 cxd5 ♘xd4**

On 13...♘xg5, 14 dxc6 decides.

**14 ♕xd4 ♘xg5**

**15 ♕xg7!**

After this natural move White obtains an irresistible attack.

**15 ... ♘xf3+**
**16 ♗xf3 ♖f8**
**17 ♖ac1!**

This is more precise than 17 ♖fe1+ ♔d8.

**17 ... ♗xh2+**

Forced, as on 17...♕d7 there would follow 18 ♖fe1+ ♗e7 19 d6 ♕xd6 20 ♖cd1 ♕g6 21 ♕e5 ♗e6 22 ♗xb7.

**18 ♔h1 ♕d6**
**19 g3**

On top of everything, White wins back his piece.

**19 ... ♗xg3**

This hastens the end somewhat, but to have a position like Black's, and to be a pawn down as well, is not a cheerful prospect.

**20 fxg3 ♗f5**

It seems out of place to recommend 20...♗d7 as being slightly better.

**21 ♖fe1+ 1-0**

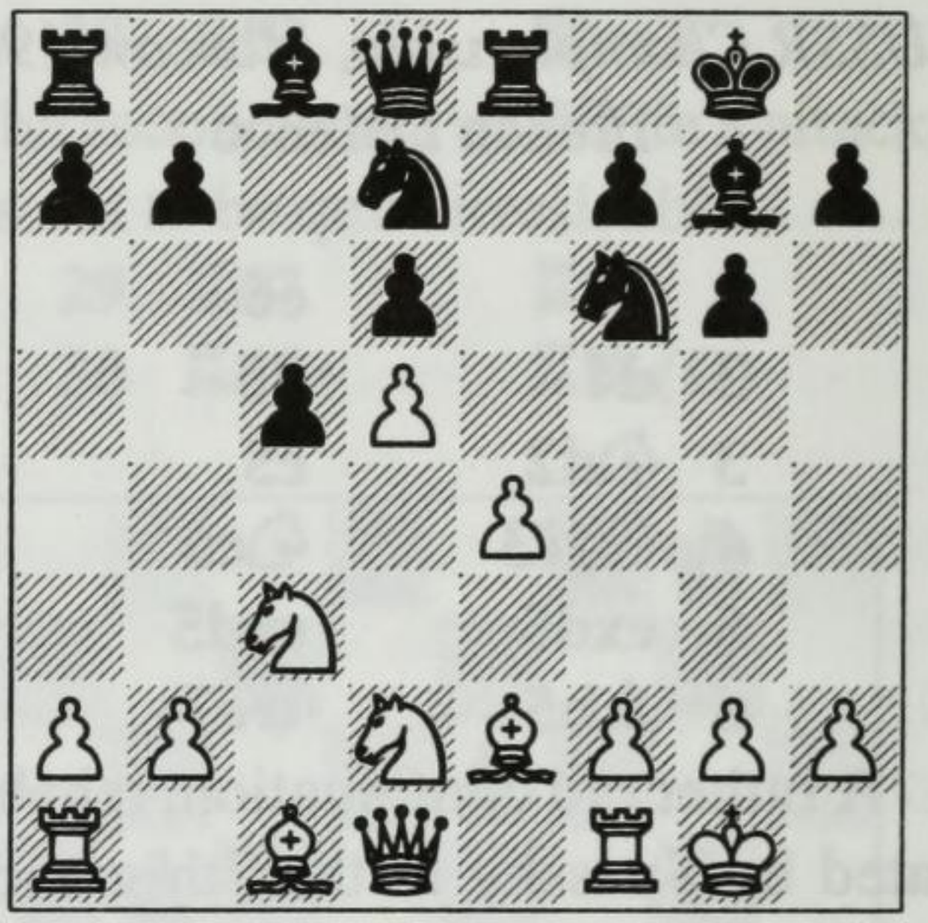
In view of the variation 21...♔d7 22 ♕g5 ♗g6 23 ♖e7+ ♕xe7 24 ♖c7+ ♔xc7 25 ♕xe7+ ♔b6 26 ♕d6+.

## Game 80
## Tukmakov – Tal
*USSR Championship, Moscow 1969*
Modern Benoni Defence

**1 d4 ♘f6**
**2 c4 c5**
**3 d5 e6**
**4 ♘c3 exd5**
**5 cxd5 d6**
**6 e4 g6**
**7 ♘f3 ♗g7**
**8 ♗e2 0-0**
**9 0-0 ♖e8**
**10 ♘d2**

This position is not new. Usually Black plays 10...♘a6, against which the solid system beginning with 11 f3 is very unpleasant; after soundly reinforcing the e4-square, White subsequently prevents Black's freeing move ...b5.

**10 ... ♘bd7** *(D)*




A move which has been studied comparatively little. The correct reaction to it probably involves the advance f4. Tukmakov's next move, which is made in analogy with the game Bukić-Tal (Yugoslavia-USSR Match, 1967), turns out badly, since Black's queen's knight can move to e5, and in some cases assist in the development of an attack on the kingside.

**11 f3 a6**
**12 a4 ♕c7**
**13 ♕b3?**

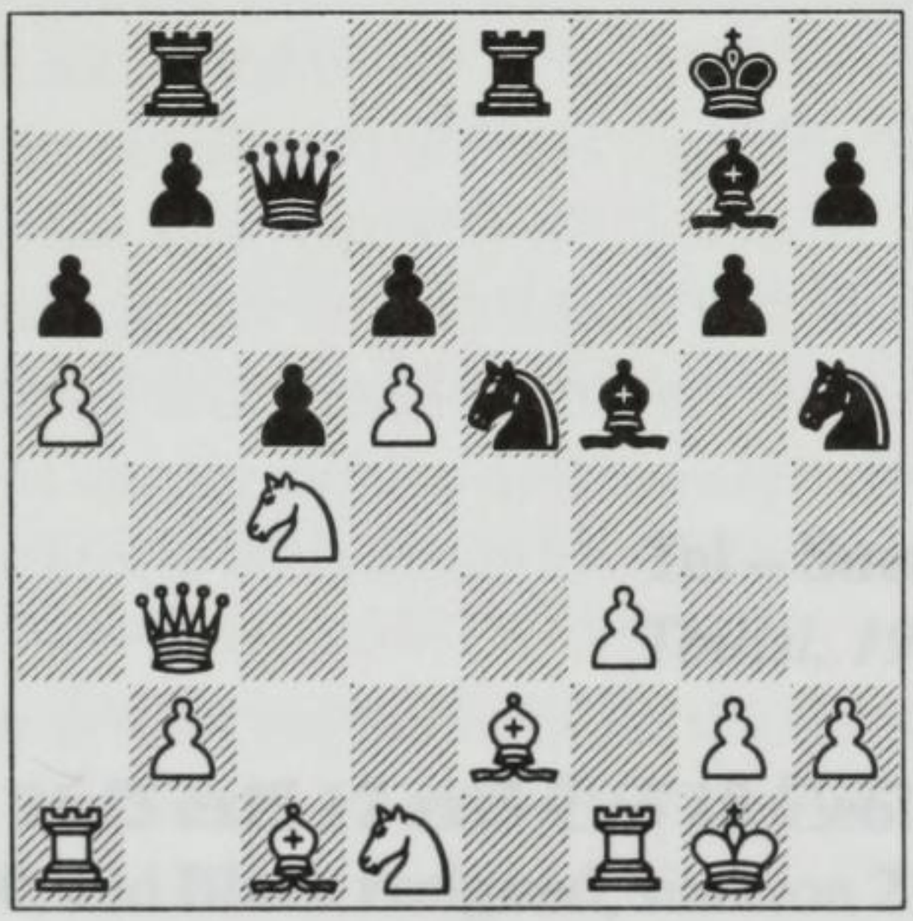
This queen move is clearly bad. White tries to prevent the move ...b5, but does this uneconomically, since the removal of the queen to b3 allows Black to worry his opponent on the kingside: after all, apart from the well-tried ...b5, there is also the purely King's Indian move ...f5! Correct was 13 ♘c4 ♘b6 14 ♘a3 with a complicated game.

**13 ... ♘e5**
**14 a5 ♖b8**
**15 ♘d1**

Part of the same plan. White aims to establish a knight on the c4-square.

**15 ... ♘h5**
**16 ♘c4 f5!**
**17 exf5 ♗xf5** *(D)*

During his analysis, Black also considered the less committal 17...♘xc4 18 ♗xc4 (18 ♕xc4 ♗d4+ 19 ♔h1 ♕e7!) 18...b5 19 axb6 ♖xb6 20 ♕a2 gxf5, but rejected it because of 20 ♕c2 ♗xf5 21 ♗d3, although in this case also he has an excellent position.



**18 g4**

Practically forced.

**18 ... ♘xc4**
**19 ♗xc4**

On 19 ♕xc4 Black has a choice between 19...♗d4+ and 20...♕e7, or the simple 19...♗d7.

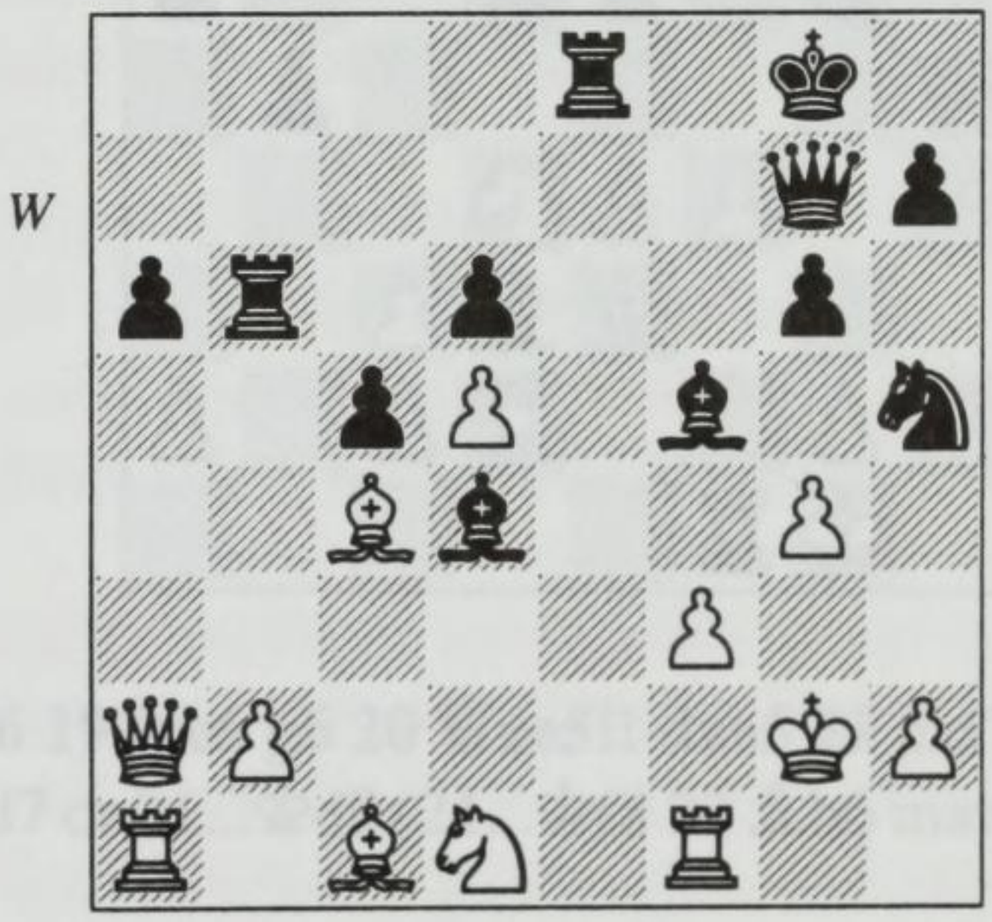
**19 ... b5**
**20 axb6 ♖xb6**
**21 ♕a2**

During the game both players believed that 21 ♕a3 was weaker because of 21...♖b4. This is perhaps not altogether true since White has the move 22 b3.

**21 ... ♗d4+**

Black spent some considerable time on this apparently natural continuation, since in the first instance the piece was sacrificed on general considerations! Black assumed that his attack, in which all his pieces are taking part, should be irresistible and, in analysing the move 17...♗xf5, did not try to find a concrete solution. White quickly played ...

**22 ♔g2 ♕g7** *(D)*



Now 23 gxf5 fails to 23...gxf5+ 24 ♔h1 ♔h8!

**23 ♘c3**

Evidently the strongest continuation, allowing White to hold the position for the moment, but now Black can quietly move his attacked pieces back, maintaining (at no cost!) all the advantages of his position.

**23 ... ♗d7**

White cannot capture the knight – 24 gxh5 gxh5+ 25 ♔h1 ♗h3.

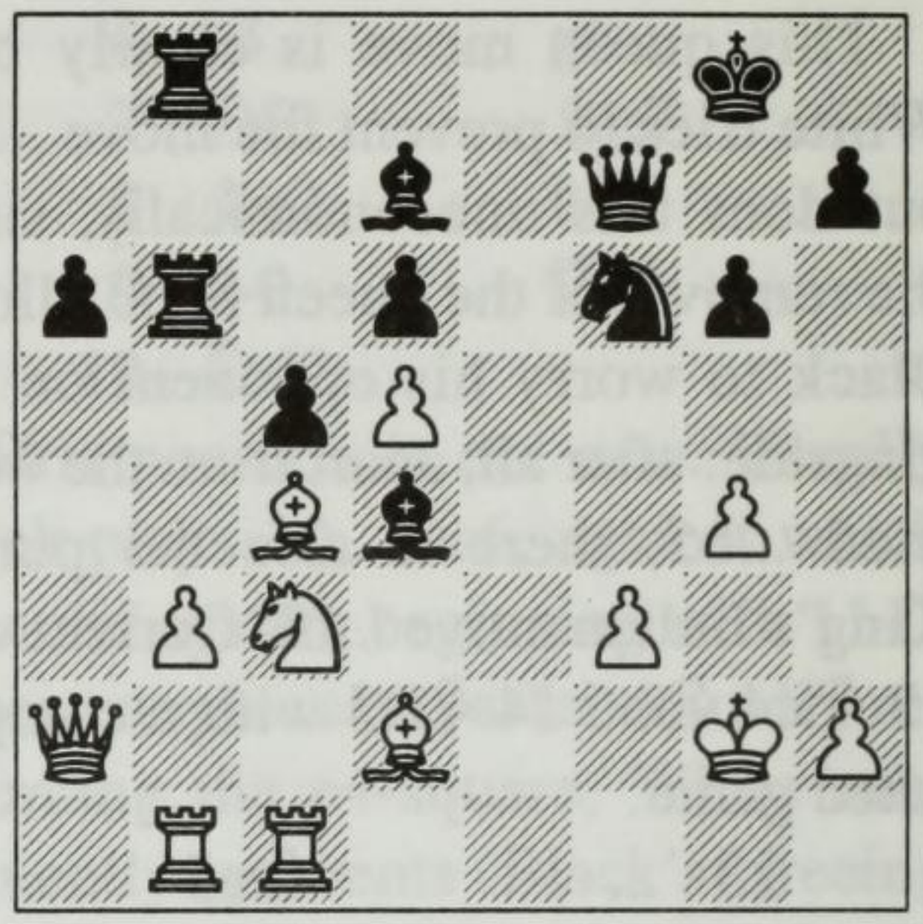
**24 ♗d2 ♖eb8**

**25 ♖ab1 ♘f6**

The excitement has died down. Material is equal, but White's position is compromised on both flanks.

**26 ♖fc1 ♕f7**

**27 b3** *(D)*



*B*

An oversight, of course, but White's position was already very difficult.

**27 ... ♘xg4**

**28 ♘e4 ♘e5**

**0-1**

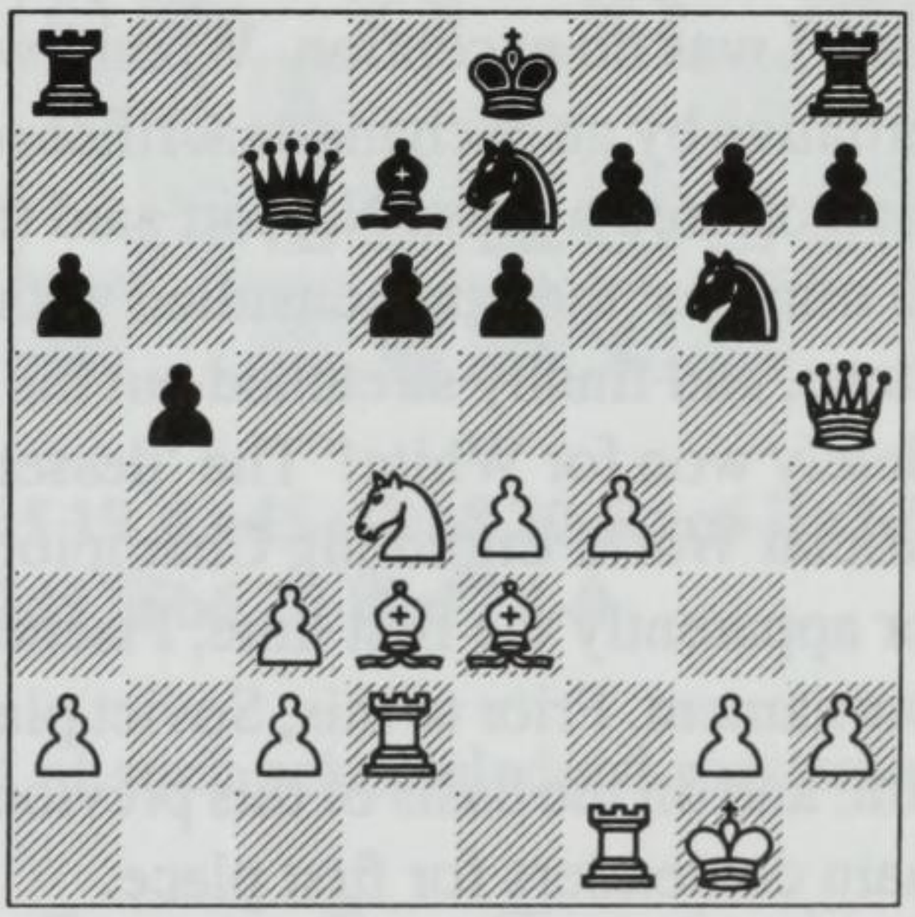
The new wave of the attack is irreversible and irresistible.

# 8 My 'Death' and my New Life

It was now that I realised that in my present state it was impossible for me to continue living and playing chess. I travelled to Tbilisi, and there they removed my diseased kidney, which evidently should have been done 2-3 years earlier. If it is possible to talk at all about renaissance, that was how I felt when I came round after the operation. On roughly the fifth day, I was already impatiently awaiting my next tournament.

It was just at this time that a rumour began to spread, to the effect that during the operation I had suffered a complete and final 'defeat'. It reached Yugoslavia, and my friends from the Moscow 'Mossovyet' Theatre, who were on tour there at that time, were saddened to read in a number of Yugoslav newspapers of the death of Tal. I hastened to reassure my friends, quoting them the words of one of the classic humorists: 'The rumours about my death are greatly exaggerated!'

The tournament about which I had been dreaming began in Tbilisi roughly a month after the operation and I played there with particular pleasure. I don't know whether this really happened, but later I was told that when I sacrificed my queen against Suetin, the following comment was made: 'not bad for a dead man, don't you think!'




**Tal – Suetin**
*Tbilisi, 1969*

**16 f5 exf5 17 exf5 ♘e5 18 ♘e6! ♗xe6 19 fxe6 g6 20 ♕xe5!! dxe5 21 exf7+ 1-0**, and **Black resigned**, since on 21...♔d7 or 21...♔d8 (21...♔f8 22 ♗h6 mate), 22 ♗f5+ is decisive.

Several of my other games were also of interest. As a result, despite the strength of the opposition – Hort, Bronstein, and a number of other Grandmasters – I succeeded in sharing first place with the tournament 'host' Gurgenidze, who reached the Grandmaster norm.

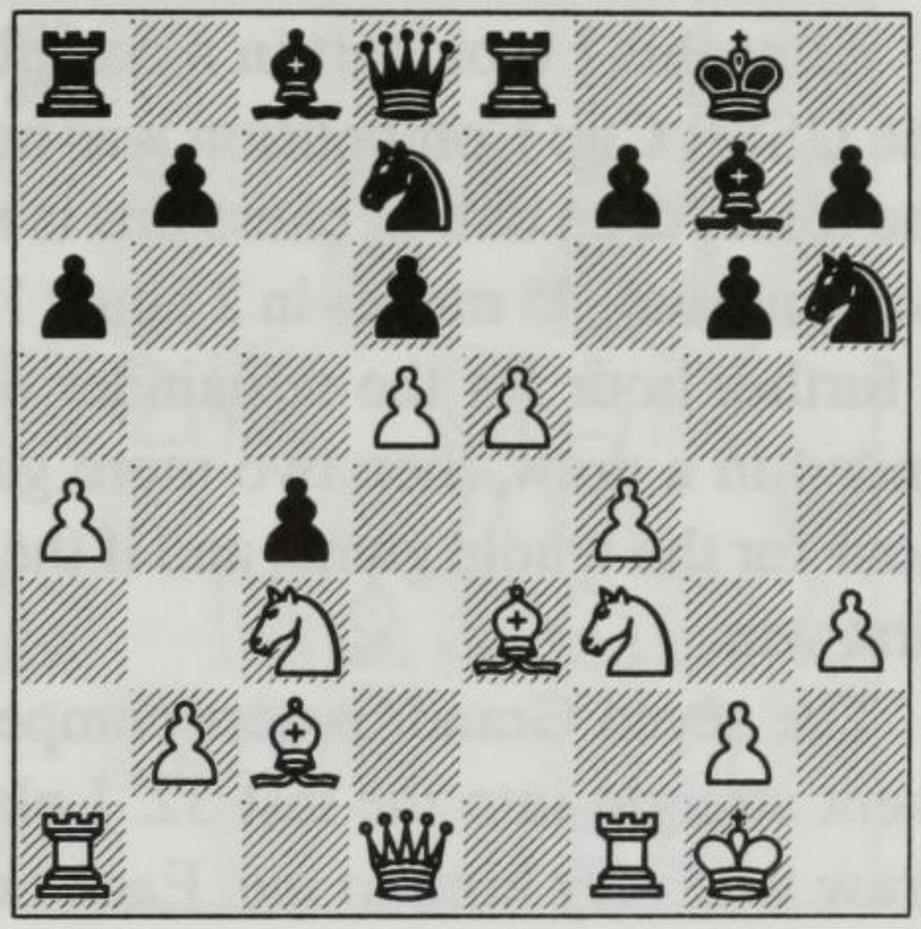
I felt fine, but the doctors nevertheless advised me not to change climate straight away, but to spend some time in Tbilisi under their observation. At this time agreement had been reached about the 'Match of the Century', in which, despite my recent results, I was allotted a fairly high board. Before the meeting in Belgrade I also found time to take part in the Georgian Championship, though I had to play hurriedly, sometimes at the rate of two games per day. I set off to Moscow to prepare for the 'Match of the Century', not even knowing how the Championship had ended, and only from the weekly *64* did I find out that I had taken first place. It was time for the chess festival, the 'Match of the Century'.

Brilliant organisation, the best players in the world, and a hard struggle. I, for example, was expecting from force of habit to get the better of Najdorf, since formerly I had always won as White, whereas when he was White he usually aimed for a draw from the start.

On this occasion Najdorf maintained the equilibrium as Black in the first game. In the second game he offered me a draw in a position where he had compensation for a pawn minus. In reply I began to play more sharply, and came under a mating attack.

The third game is given here, and then in the fourth round the USSR team played very cautiously, since the day before we had lost the greater part of our lead. I was no exception. When I was faced by a decision: to attempt to seize the initiative by an exchange sacrifice, or to play quietly, I chose the second path, and soon offered a draw. Najdorf said that he would consider it, then twice during his 45 minutes' thought consulted with the captain of the Rest of the World team, Dr Euwe, and finally stretched out his hand to me, adding: 'But the position is completely won for White!' The 'dessert' after the 'Match of the Century' was the unofficial World Lightning Championship. Interest was intensified by the fact that, for apparently the first time, Fischer was taking part in an international lightning tournament. Prior to this, Soviet players had often played five-minute games with him, and on the basis of this previous experience he was not considered one of the main contenders for first place.

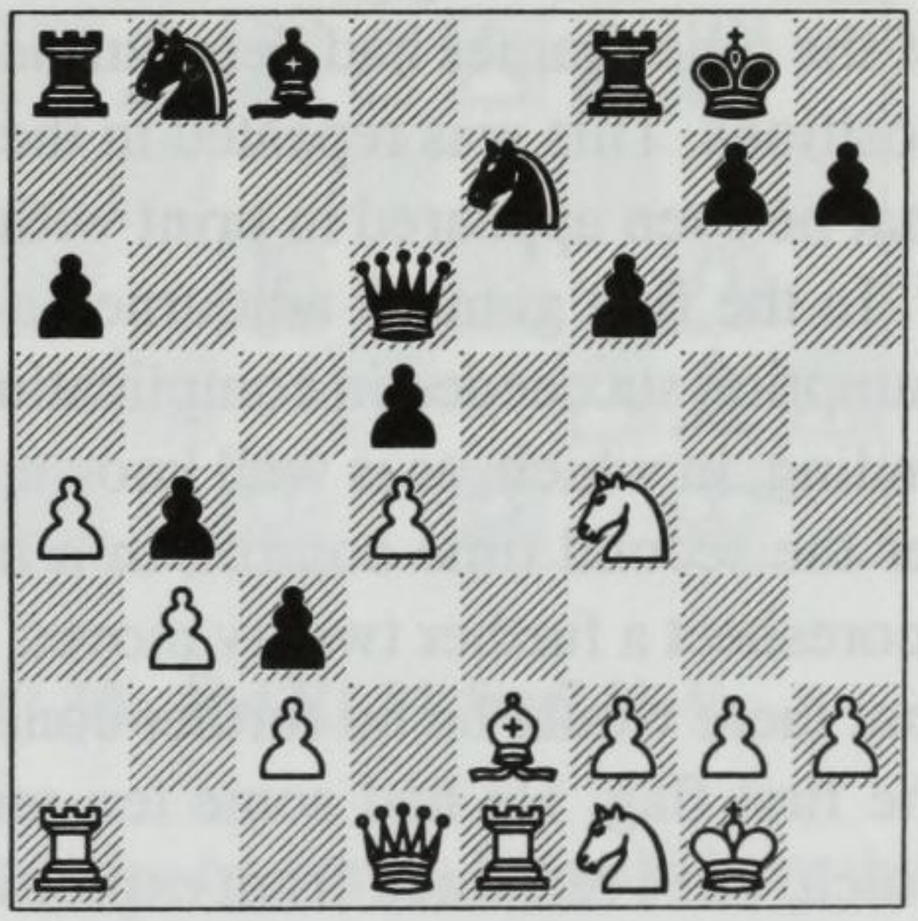
In the first round, by tradition, I lost to him from a superior ending, and in the second was technically punished by Robert for attempting to win one back. He played excellently throughout the tournament, and ended up the winner, but I played unevenly, losing several strange games. My wins against Reshevsky and Korchnoi are worth mentioning.



*W*

**Reshevsky – Tal**
*Herceg Novi Blitz, 1970*

**17 g4 dxe5 18 fxe5 ♘xe5 19 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 20 ♗d4 ♖g5 21 ♗xg7 ♘xg4 22 hxg4 ♗xg4 23 ♕d4 ♗h3+ 24 ♔f2 ♖g2+ 25 ♔f3 ♕g5 26 ♕f4 ♕h5+ 27 ♔e3 ♖e8+ 28 ♔d4 ♖g4 29 ♗f6 ♗xf1 30 ♖xf1 ♖xf4+ 31 ♖xf4 ♕h2 32 ♖e4 ♕f2+ 33 ♔xc4 ♖c8+ 34 ♔b3 ♕xf6 0-1**



*W*

**Tal – Korchnoi**
*Herceg Novi Blitz, 1970*

**16 ♗f3 ♘bc6 17 ♘e3 ♕xf4 18 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 19 ♗xd5+ ♔h8 20 ♗xc6 ♖a7 21 ♕e2 ♕xd4 22 ♖ad1 ♕c5 23 ♕e8 ♖af7 24 ♖d5 ♕b6 25 ♕xf7 1-0**

I succeeded in taking second place, ahead of such acknowledged masters of blitz as Korchnoi and Petrosian.

Then I appeared for the Soviet team in the European Team Championship at Kapfenberg. Clearly, if the USSR team had been able to defeat the Rest of the World in the 'Match of the Century', on the same 10 boards the best teams of Europe were beaten without much difficulty. One of my games, against Kolarov, has found its way into this book.

After this I took part in a completely new, unusual event. In Dnepropetrovsk, the USSR Cup Competition was held on the so-called Olympic system, in which the losers drop out. In chess this is not normal, and in addition, the time limit used was unusual: 45 moves in 2 hours 15 minutes, then 20 moves in the next hour, and a further hour for the remainder of the game. If the main match of four games ended in a draw, then two more games were to be played at semi-blitz speed, 1 hour for the whole game, and if the score was still level, so on at this rate until the first win.

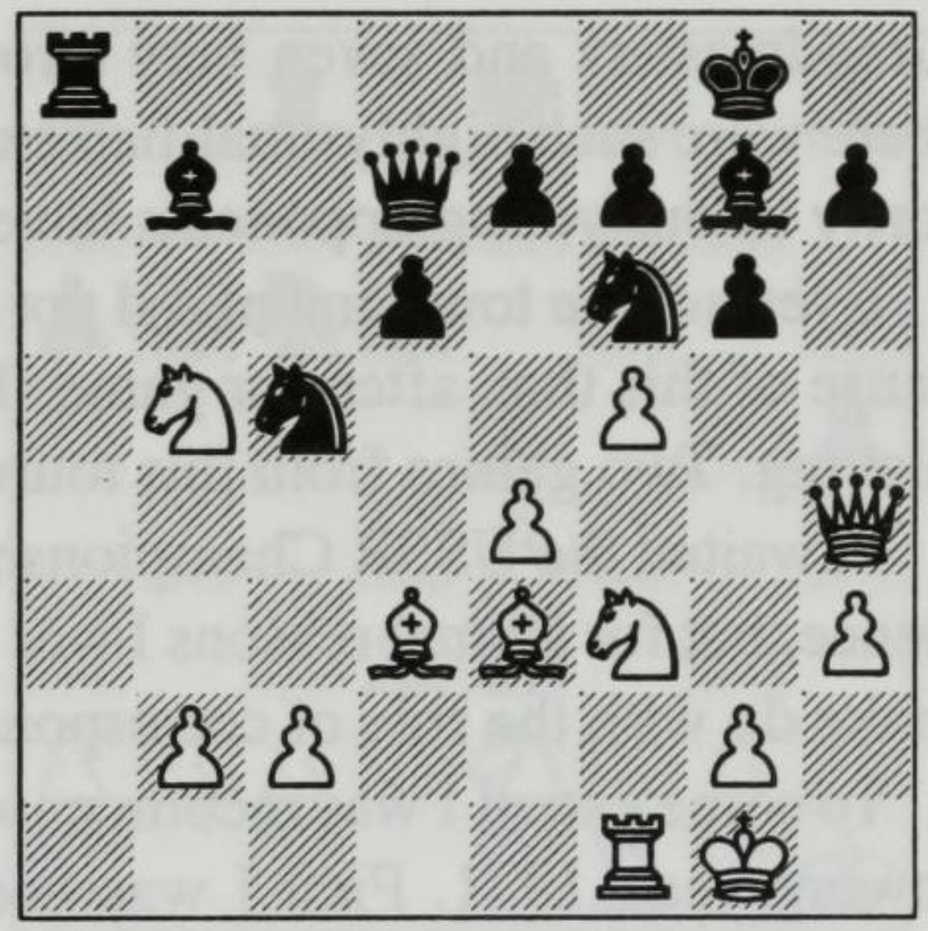
The seven Grandmasters competing were exempted from the first round, and went straight into the last 32. I played three matches, and I cannot say that the draw was very kind to me. Each encounter was with a 'known' player, although there were a number of less experienced masters, unfamiliar to me, taking part at Dnepropetrovsk. One of the games from my first match, with the very solid International Master Bagirov, is given here. Our match finished ahead of schedule since after a draw in the first game I won the next two. The fate of each of my next two matches was decided in the last game. First I played against Grandmaster Gufeld. Over a long period he had only won once against me, and in the majority of the other games had been unsuccessful, although he had sometimes had good positions. This was repeated in the match, and Gufeld reacted so strongly to this that he even appeared in print with notes to three of the games.

In the first game, I adjourned a pawn down in a difficult position, but on resumption succeeded in complicating my opponent's task, and we reached a queen ending, in which, as is well known, one can give as many checks as one likes. After the second time control, in a now equal position, Gufeld marked off on his scoresheet a further twenty moves, and was most surprised when I reminded him that there would be no further control, and that we had to play on until the fall of the first flag. He had some ten minutes remaining, while I had about twice as much, but I refrained from exploiting such an 'advantage'.

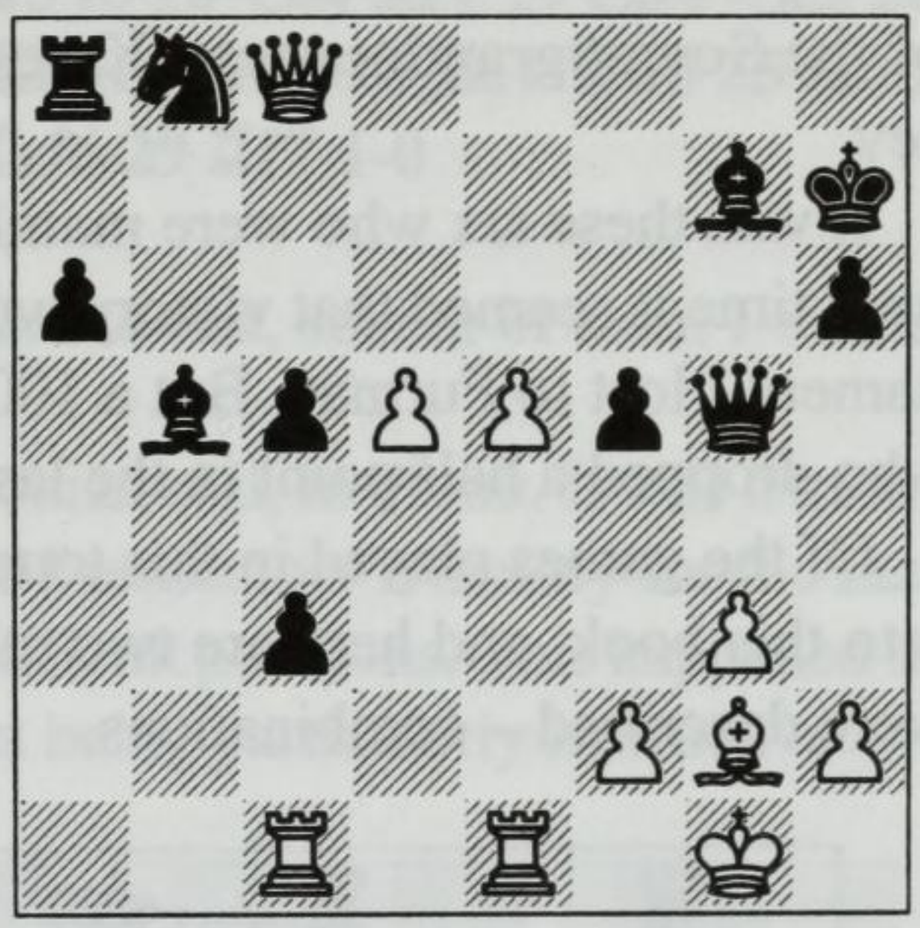
The next two games were drawn, and then in the fourth, my opponent's nerves did not hold out (*see diagram on following page*).

**19 ♗xc5! gxf5!** 19...dxc5 is weaker in view of 20 ♘e5 and 21 ♗c4. **20 ♘xd6! exd6 21 ♗d4 fxe4 22 ♘g5 exd3 23 ♗xf6 h6 24 ♗xg7 ♕c6 25 ♕f2!** The concluding subtlety: 25 ♖f2 dxc2 26 ♕xh6 c1♕+ 27 ♔h2 fails to 27...♕f4+. **25...♕xg2+ 26 ♕xg2 ♗xg2 27 ♔xg2 ♔xg7 28 ♘f3**, and a few moves later Black resigned (**1-0**).

My third match, with Savon, proceeded in similar fashion to the previous one. The first three games were drawn, and of these only the first was of interest.



**Tal – Gufeld**
*USSR Cup, 1970*



**Savon – Tal**
*USSR Cup, 1970*

**28...♘c6! 29 ♕xa8 ♘xe5 30 f4?!** 30 ♖xc3!? **30...♘d3!! 31 fxg5 ½-½**

I was confident that, if the fourth game should also be drawn, I would have the better chances in the 'quick' games, but suddenly it seemed to me that my opponent had played the opening too loosely as Black, and I decided to 'punish' him, and sacrificed a pawn. This led to a slightly better ending for Black, in which Savon began to 'torment' me. I was unable to stand this 'torture', and so I did not go forward into the semi-final.

The winner of the Cup was the initiator of the event in this form, Grandmaster Bronstein.

Whether it was because I did not perform too well in this event or for some other reason, I don't know, but after the USSR Cup I was forgotten, and remembered only when the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League decided to hold a very interesting Match-Tournament in Sochi, between seven

Grandmasters and seven very strong young masters. In the Grandmaster team there were such highly-qualified examiners as Korchnoi and Stein, while the majority of our young opponents have since become Grandmasters themselves.

Even so, the tournament did not have an official status, and perhaps it was because of this that, after our game, Tukmakov said that in Sochi the 'old Tal' was playing. Two games from this tournament are given here.

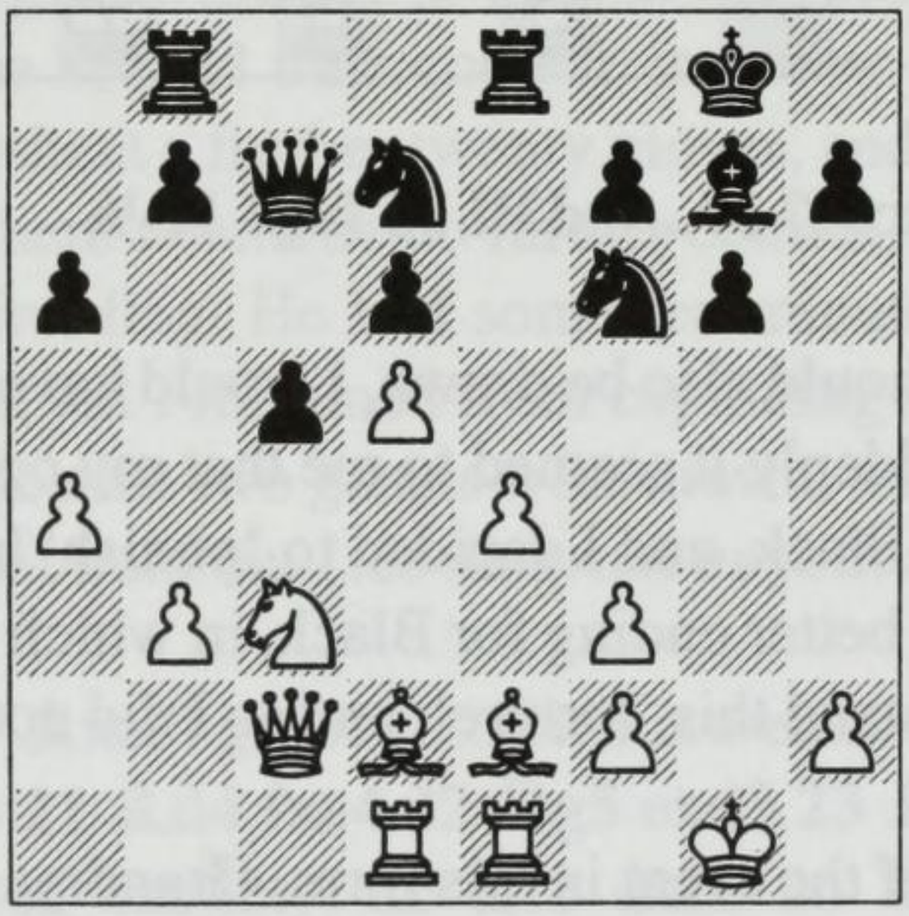
I awaited the USSR Championship in my home town of Riga with great impatience, but for formal reasons I was not allowed in. Much as it pained me, I had to make do with the role of correspondent.

To some extent I was recompensed by an abundance of tournaments in the following year, 1971. First I was hospitably invited by our neighbours from the North to the Tallinn international tournament, which was then becoming traditional. The event turned out to be quite imposing; it is sufficient to list the names of the Soviet grandmasters: Keres, Stein, Bronstein, Furman, Tal and A. Zaitsev.

It was these six who were mainly concerned in the battle for first place. For a long time it seemed that victory would go to Keres, for in the middle of the tournament I lost to Furman. But a 100% finish enabled me to catch Paul Petrovich, who dropped a half point in the last round to that same Furman.

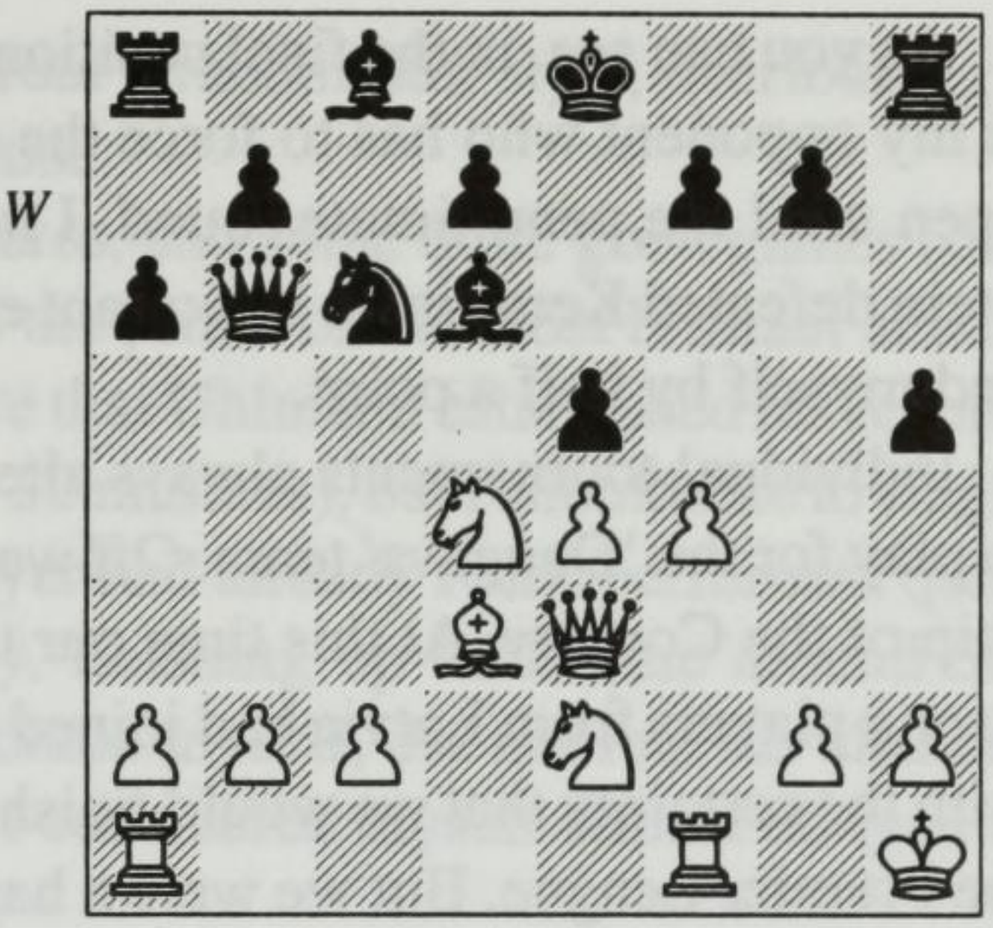
Of the games played in this tournament, the one with Wade has found its way into this book, and here are two more half-correct – 'typically Tal-like', as they were described – combinations.

*B*



**Nei – Tal**
*Tallinn, 1971*

**17...c4 18 bxc4 ♘e5 19 ♘b1 ♖bc8 20 ♘a3 ♕d7 21 f4 ♘eg4 22 f3 ♘xe4 23 fxg4 ♗d4+ 24 ♔g2 ♘f2 25 ♗c1 ♗c5 26 h3 ♕e7 27 ♗f3 ♕h4 28 ♖h1 ♘xh1 29 ♖xh1 ♖e1 30 ♖xe1 ♕xe1 31 h4 ♖e8 0-1**

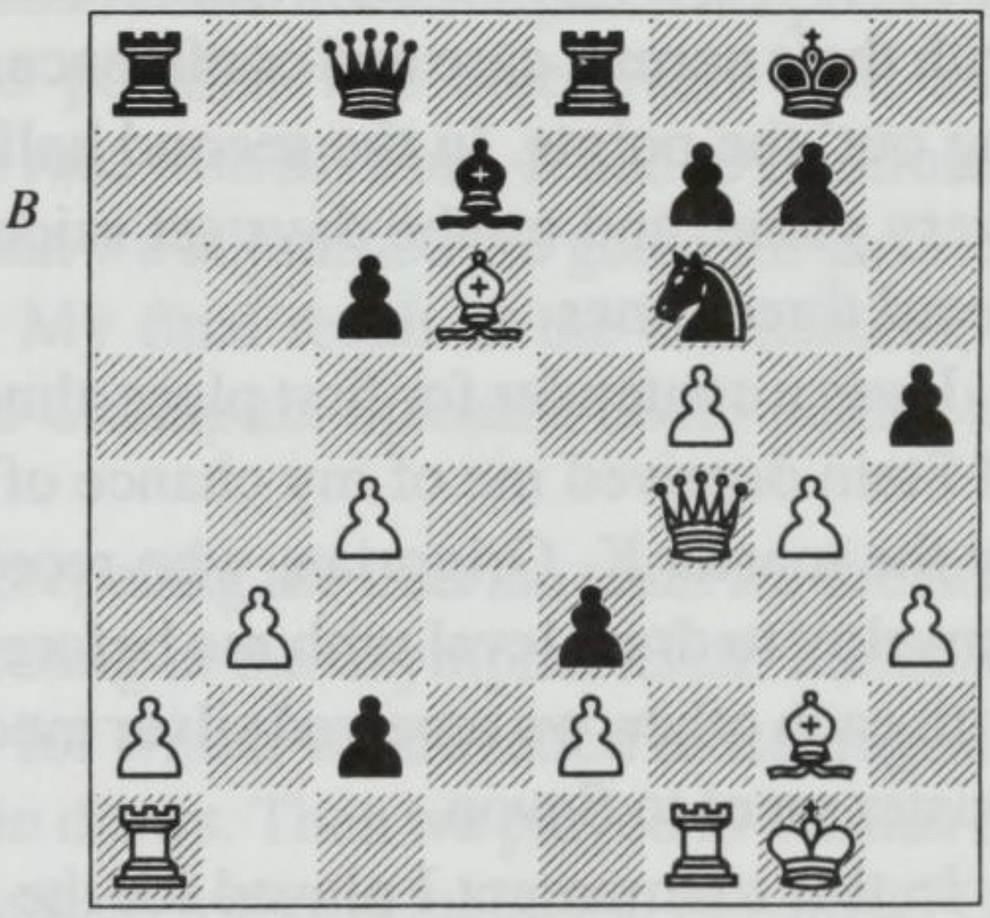


**Tal – Vooremaa**
*Tallinn, 1971*

**14 ♕g3 exd4 15 ♕xg7 ♖f8 16 e5 ♗e7 17 f5 f6 18 ♘f4 ♖f7 19 exf6 ♘e5 20 ♗c4 ♘xc4 21 ♕g8+ ♗f8 22 ♘xh5 ♘d6 23 ♖ae1+ ♔d8 24 ♖e7 ♕b5 25 ♖fe1 ♕d5 26 ♘f4 ♕xa2 27 ♘e6+ ♕xe6 28 fxe6 ♖xf6 29 ♖f7 1-0**

Such fragments inspired me with the confidence that, sooner or later, I would get back to my best form.

My next tournament also took place on Estonian soil, in Parnu. It was a training event, so only Soviet players took part, and I remember it mainly for the fact that in several games I managed to slip out of difficult positions. This happened in the games with Stein, Keres and Etruk, the last being particularly instructive.



**Etruk – Tal**
*Parnu, 1971*

**29...c5! 30 g5 ♘h7 31 ♗d5 ♔h8 32 ♗xf7** 32 g6! **32...♗c6! 33 ♗xe8 ♕xe8 34 ♗e5 ♘xg5 35 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 36 ♕xg5+ ♔h7 37 ♕g6+ ♕xg6+ 38 fxg6+ ♔xg6 39 h4 ♖d8 40 ♔h2 ♖d4 41 ♔h3 ♗d7+ 42 ♔g3 ♗c6 ½-½**

As you can see, in the final position I am the exchange and a pawn down, but it is my opponent who has to force the draw. The question of first place remained open until the penultimate round. I lost recklessly to the master Kyarner, while Stein defeated Keres in an important encounter, and finished first, ahead of Keres and myself by half a point.

Individual tournaments always alternate with team events, and I was still 'fit' to play for the 'Daugava' team. Off we went to Rostov-on-Don, to the Championship of the Country. At this time our team was experiencing a crisis, since many strong players from Latvia had joined the Army Sports Club and accompanied us with the certainty that we would finish in one of the bottom places and drop out of the Premier League. But we were a happy group, and once again an old truth was confirmed: in team events, a high Elo coefficient is only half (and the less important half!) of a guarantee of success.

I played pretty well, and received the prize for the best result on board one, but some really severe tests awaited me at the end of the year: first the USSR Championship in Leningrad, and then the International Alekhine Memorial Tournament in Moscow.

In Leningrad I could not rid myself of a strange sensation. Everything was apparently going alright: at first three draws and then four wins in a row, but somewhere inside me there was this feeling: 'There's something missing'. Indeed, as White I then lost without a fight to Shamkovich – this was one of the most undistinguished games of my whole life.

Then fatigue gradually began to take over. After all, when thoughts do not arise with their normal ease and confidence, one has to compensate for this by 'squeezing out' the points. In the second half of the Championship, I adjourned almost every game, and on the days set aside for adjournments I had to sit down at the board three times.

I was a contender for first place almost to the very end, but a defeat at the hands of Stein deprived me of my chance of taking the title, while an amazing defence by the master K. Grigorian, who received the prize for the best ending, allowed Smyslov to draw level with me before the last round. By drawing this final game with each other, we received silver medals, while the 'gold' and the title of Grandmaster went to Savon.

In this tournament I played for the first time against Anatoly Karpov. On this occasion no real fight developed, but we more than made up for this with a very tense struggle a month later in the Alekhine Memorial.

Eighteen Grandmasters took part in that event (only Balashov was awaiting confirmation of his title). My play was highly uneven. It began in my now traditional first round, when I gave the spectators a few happy moments by declining

a draw against Olafsson, and then, in far from Grandmaster style, overlooking a standard mate in two moves on the back rank.

Subsequently there were further adventures, and some quite good games (one of them, against Uhlmann, which received the prize for the most brilliant attack, is given in the book; incidentally, it was here that Uhlmann established his record, thinking over the move 12...exf5 for 1 hour 50 minutes), but I should like to single out the game with Karpov. This young player had already twice performed quite well in the Championship of our Country, finishing up each time around 5th place, but the veterans, among whom I include myself, did not rate his chances very highly. On sitting down against him, I considered myself almost obliged to win.

A few inaccuracies, and Karpov found himself in difficulties; then he overlooked a small tactical finesse, and came out a pawn down with an inferior position. At this point, having confirmed for myself my sceptical assessment of Karpov's play, I considered the fate of the game to be decided.

But I only had to play not very accurately for Anatoly to obtain immediate counterplay. The position became sharper, and then an ending was reached in which I had two rooks against a queen. I recalled a similar ending from my match with Korchnoi and decided that history would not repeat itself, and that I would play cautiously and accurately, and head for the adjournment.

For some reason or other, I did not manage to analyse the position thoroughly, and we decided that I should make a sufficient number of moves to reach the second adjournment, since Karpov, in our opinion, could not strengthen his position.

Evidently Karpov also realised that his position was objectively lost, and straight after the resumption he made a bold raid with his king. It had to be refuted tactically, but for this I was unprepared. When we adjourned the game for the second time the position was already drawn. My final result in the tournament, a share of 6th-7th places with the then World Champion Spassky, could hardly be considered a success for either of us.

The first quarter of 1972 was devoted to preparing the Latvian team for the first ever All-Union Chess Olympiad, and competing in the Olympiad itself. Included in these preparations was a friendly match for which we travelled to Leningrad. Both of my games against Korchnoi ended in draws. Then we played in Vilnius in the traditional tournament for the Baltic Capitals with the inclusion of Minsk. Of the three games here, I drew two, lost the third to the master Kapengut, and then we set off to Moscow for the Olympiad.

Once again we took part in the traditional semi-finals, and once again the draw brought us up against the Byelorussian team – our regular opponents against whom we are usually lucky.

JOURNALIST. *Just a moment! The class of your play is significantly higher than that of your fellow team members. What are your duties associated with this?*

CHESS PLAYER. The main one, strange as it may seem, is not the individual 'extracting' of points: these are equally valuable on the first board and on the tenth. The main duty is a consultation with each player before each round (true, this does not apply to Gipslis and Klovans when we appear for the Latvian team, and not 'Daugava'), and, of course, the analysis of adjourned positions, difficult though it may be to straight away produce a 'diagnosis' on each of 5-6 adjournments in the same round. To return to the Olympiad, up to the last round of the semi-final it was not clear who would go forward to the main final: our team, or the Byelorussians. (The formidable Moscow team was already safely assured of one place.) In the penultimate round we heavily defeated Byelorussia, and in the last round – Kazakhstan (my game from this match with the master M. Mukhin is given here), and we went forward into the final.

There we finished in 'our own' sixth place. I would have taken first place on board one if I had simply not played in the last round, and instead had given up my place to a reserve. However, our last round opponents were the Leningrad team, and I could not avoid playing against Korchnoi: our chess 'relationship' was too well known to everyone. So I played, the game ended in a draw, and the prize for the best result amongst the leaders went to Keres. This especially pleased me, since he was a founder of the Riga magazine *Shakhmaty*.

After the Olympiad came another interval of four months, and how difficult it is to keep in good form without the necessary practice...

This chess 'Lent' was broken by a small tournament in Viljandi, one of those organised with such skill and love by Estonian chess players. In this little resort there assembled three Grandmasters, several masters, and the strongest Estonian players. It was here – although of course I found this out only later – that I suffered my last defeat in 1972. The tournament developed into a race between myself and the Moscow master Dvoretsky, but when I lost to the master Uusi (the game was adjourned in a drawn position, but on the way to the tournament hall I suddenly ceased to want a draw, and on the second move I allowed my opponent to force mate), Shamkovich and Suetin immediately drew level with me. Really enraged by such a stupid loss I defeated both of them, then scored my third point in succession in the last round, but nevertheless finished half a point behind Dvoretsky.

And then – though I naturally had no suspicion of it at the time – there began that long series of games without defeat, of which, to my sincere amazement, so much was written in the press.

Up till the last minute, the composition of our Olympiad team was not fixed, and in the end, when those who had definitely been included were making preparations, Savon and I set off to an International Tournament in Sukhumi. This was considered to be a final testing for us, and for this I personally was glad: I have always preferred live participation in a tournament to theoretical preparation.

And so – Sukhumi. It was hot, with the temperature in the shade sometimes reaching 35°C, and the Northerners amongst us suffered pretty badly from it. Thus, for instance, Robert Hübner, with whom I became acquainted in Sukhumi, got sunburnt and his skin began to peel.

I began the tournament moderately, although I realised that it was bound to develop into a race with Savon. As it turned out, my game with him was the critical one. In the opening I fell into a variation prepared by Army players, got into a difficult position, and only succeeded in gaining some sort of play just before the time control. Even so, I had no real illusions about the adjourned position, which is just what Savon thought, and evidently it was this that allowed me to slip out.

In the course of the resumption the following episode occurred. We were playing with a clock of far from perfect construction, and on which the flag fell at nowhere near the correct time. It fell on Savon's clock just as he was making his last move before the time control. I saw that by rights White had at least a minute left, and to demand a loss on time in such circumstances seemed blasphemous to me. All these thoughts occurred in a flash, and before the controller had time to record the fall of the flag, I made a move and pressed my clock. The game subsequently ended in a draw. Towards the end I managed to win almost every game, and thus take first place, while for the following game I was awarded a special prize.

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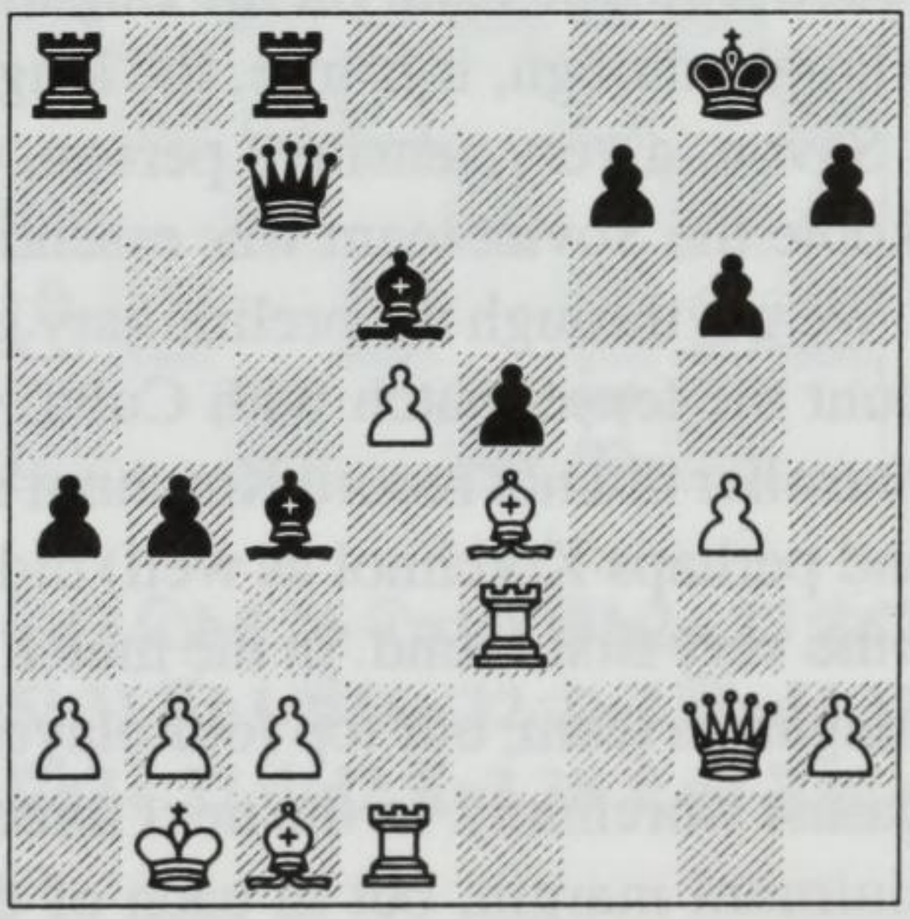
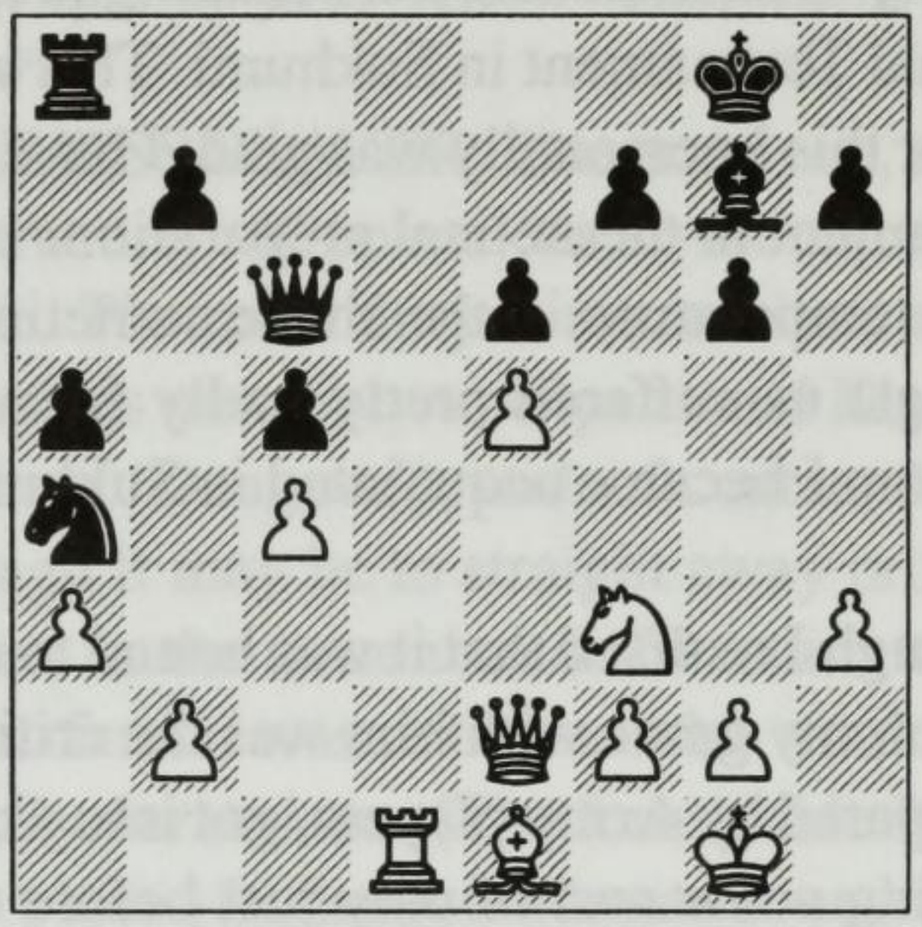


**Honfi – Tal**
*Sukhumi, 1972*

**25...b3! 26 cxb3 axb3 27 axb3 ♗e2!! 28 ♕xe2 ♕a5 29 ♖c3 ♕a2+ 30 ♔c2 ♖xc3+ 31 ♔xc3 ♗b4+! 32 ♔xb4 ♕a5+ 33 ♔c4 ♕a6+ 0-1**

The following combination was also of interest.



**Tal – Suttles**
*Sukhumi, 1972*

**27 ♗xa5! ♖xa5 28 ♖d8+ ♗f8 29 ♕d2 ♕c7 30 ♖e8** 30...♘b6 31 Qh6 ♕e7 32 ♘g5! **30...♔g7 31 ♕g5 ♖a7 32 ♕f6+ ♔g8 33 ♘g5 ♕d7 34 ♖d8 b6 35 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 36 b3**, and Black soon resigned (**1-0**).

After Sukhumi I was given a place in the Olympiad team, and at the last minute Savon was also included.

JOURNALIST. *How do you react to injustices committed against you?*

CHESS PLAYER. I don't care for them at all, to put it mildly. On a previous occasion I became extremely nervy when, once again at the last minute, I was excluded from the team for the Lugano Olympiad, but usually I grit my teeth and try to laugh, though, it is true, the laugh comes out rather malevolently.

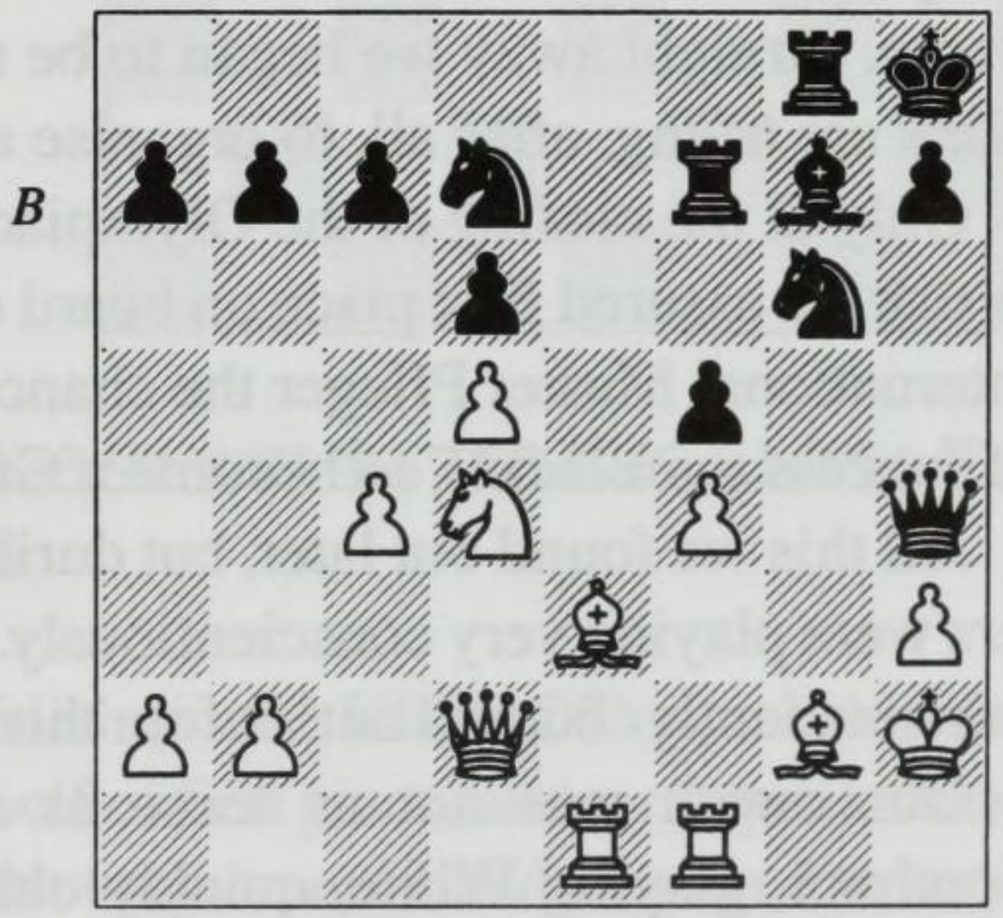
Savon, a very sensitive person, was so affected by the nervous strain, that in Skopje the Soviet team was essentially a man short.

We got through the preliminary group calmly enough, if you don't take into account the tense match with Cuba, which the Soviet team won only because the controller did not record Korchnoi's loss on time against Garcia, while the Cuban (and perhaps Korchnoi as well) did not notice it. In the final, our troubles started in the very first round. In the match with our traditionally difficult opponents, the Hungarian team, our top four players scored three draws and one loss (Bilek won against Korchnoi). In the next three matches we won with great difficulty by the minimum margin, but in each of them one of the Soviet players was defeated. There had been Olympiads where the Soviet team had gone through without losing a single game! (or, at most, one or two). But here Petrosian lost in the match against West Germany, Savon against Holland, and Karpov against Bulgaria.

I had managed to win all my games, but it is the resumption with Radulov that I recall. At that point we were by no means winning the match (one draw, three adjournments), and were more concerned with ensuring that we didn't lose. We split up into groups for analysis and my consultant was Grandmaster Keres, our team's trainer. I have quite a large number of chess memories, but that night of analysis with Keres is one of the most pleasant. The work was calm, flowing, as it were, of its own accord; every hour a cup of coffee was consumed ... and I never even suspected that such an apparently uninteresting ending (I was a pawn up, with rooks and opposite-coloured bishops) could contain so many interesting and beautiful ideas. Incidentally, the analysis proved to be highly productive, for when on the following day the game was again adjourned, on the 72nd move, Keres and I were perfectly familiar with the position: we had reached it in our analysis the previous night. There was no need for a second resumption: Radulov resigned without further play.

Since the Bulgarian Grandmaster Tringov forgot(!!) to put his scoresheet with the sealed move inside the envelope, Korchnoi was awarded the point, and we won the match.

Since the team saw that I was playing well, I was also included for the next match.




**Liebert – Tal**
*Skopje Olympiad, 1972*

**22...♘de5! 23 fxe5 ♗xe5+ 24 ♔g1 ♕g3 25 ♘f3 ♘h4 26 ♘xh4 ♕h2+ 27 ♔f2 ♗g3+ 28 ♔f3 ♗xh4 29 ♗d4+ ♗f6 30 ♕f2 ♗e5! 31 ♖h1 ♕f4+ 32 ♔e2 ♕xd4 33 ♕xd4 ♗xd4 34 ♗f3 ♖g3 35 b3 ♗c5 36 ♖ef1 ♖e7+ 37 ♔d2 ♖e3 38 ♗d1 ♖g2+ 39 ♔c1 ♖c3+ 40 ♔b1 ♗a3 0-1**

Gradually we began to steal up on the leading group, and after a victory over Yugoslavia by 2½-1½, our chances of the gold medal became fairly serious. But

then unexpected setbacks in the matches with Czechoslovakia and Argentina (all eight games were drawn!) once again undermined our position.

At the same time, the young and ambitious Hungarian team, 'scenting' success, was playing with great enthusiasm, and was close to a heavy win against the Dutch, whereupon a sensation was possible: the permanent champions – the USSR team – might not be able to catch their friends and rivals.

But suddenly the hall groaned; the Hungarian Forintos had blundered into a mate, and the chances of the two leading teams became level.

Prior to the last round, we were only slightly ahead of the Hungarians, splendidly led by Portisch. We met for the final discussion regarding the composition of our team. The leaders of our Chess Federation phoned from Moscow, and advised, even demanded, that both Tal and Karpov should definitely play. Unfortunately, we were playing on adjacent boards – myself on board four, and Karpov as first reserve – and there was no way in which we could both have the white pieces (which is what they were hoping for). As a result I was given the black pieces in the final match with Rumania.

On arriving for the match, we looked at the teams in the equally important match between Hungary and West Germany, and received a rude shock: the Germans were appearing without their leader, Grandmaster Hübner, who had won the prize for the best score on board one, and their number two, Grandmaster Darga. Straight away we began to be nagged by doubts: 'Can it be that the Germans are trying, after all, to organise a sensation?'.

Only at the closing of the Olympiad did we find out that Hübner did not want to risk his assured first place on board one, while Darga did not play, so as to give International Master Pfleger the chance to play against Portisch, and in the event of success (as Black!), to become a Grandmaster.

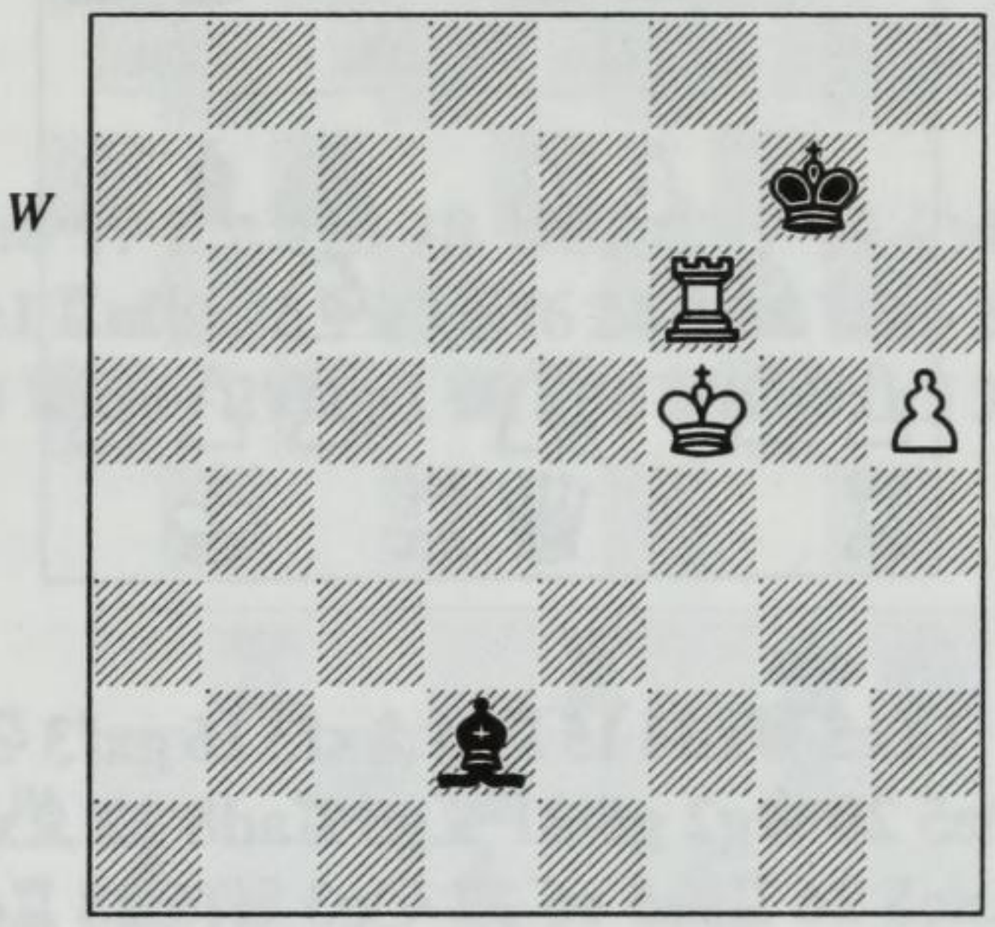
All this we found out later, but during the match we saw that the German masters were playing very conscientiously. The young Hungarians, on the other hand, were evidently 'burned out' before this decisive encounter, and the result was 2-2.

Our match was not as tense as might have been expected. Karpov and Korchnoi, playing White, quickly obtained winning positions, while Petrosian and I drew as Black.

This is how our difficult victory at the Olympiad in Skopje was achieved. On my board I took first place with a score of 12 wins and 4 draws. After this I had to make a choice: whether to play in the USSR Zonal Championship. I already had the right to play in the Interzonal Tournament, but after the story of 1970 I felt obliged not to miss any Championship of the Country in which I had the chance to play. Thus I set off for Baku, where I was the lone 'Interzonaller', and so was *hors concours* as regards the three places into the Interzonal.

I started off extremely sluggishly with six draws in a row and more than once my technique of realising an advantage misfired embarrassingly. At one point I had so lost confidence in myself, that the thought even entered my head: am I capable of winning even one game? Perhaps it was with the object of psychotherapy that I sat down in the foyer of the tournament hall to play lightning chess with local first category players. Here I was successful, my peace of mind was restored, and this told immediately on my results.

In the seventh round came a win, in the eighth also (this game against Zilberstein is given here), and so it went on. I succeeded in defeating Savon in an important game, won amusingly against Bronstein, and with direct attacks mated Shamkovich (this game is also included) and Mukhin. I can also single out the following interesting ending:




**Tal – Zhidkov**
*USSR Ch, Baku 1972*

**89 h6+ ♗xh6 90 ♖g6+ ♔h7 91 ♔f6 ♗e3 92 ♔f7 ♗a7 93 ♖a6 ♗b8 94 ♖a8 ♗c7 95 ♖c8 ♗f4 96 ♖c4 ♗g5 97 ♖c3 1-0**

As a result, several rounds before the finish (in the USSR Championship this occurs extremely rarely) I had assured myself of first place, and took quick draws in my last three games. In the middle of the tournament I had managed to score 10½ points out of 12.

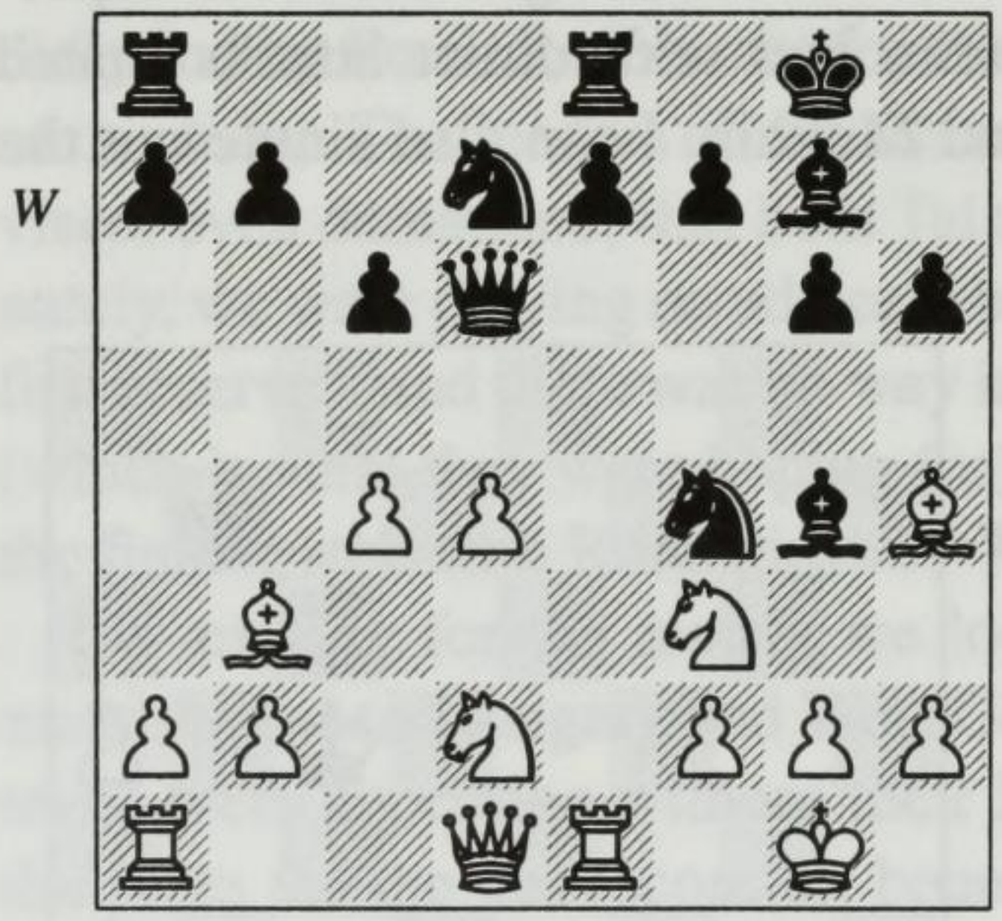
The Championship ended, and the 'Russian troika' of Grandmasters – Balashov, Vasiukov and Tal – as the Dutch described us, arrived for the traditional tournament at Wijk aan Zee.

I once again began modestly. True, in the first round I played and made the acquaintance of the young Yugoslav Albin Planinc, as well as his colleague Ljubomir Ljubojević, about whom I had heard many good things, and many sceptical ones. I found out for myself the unevenness of Planinc's play. To me he lost without

much of a fight, but then he crushed Donner and Najdorf in turn, literally within 20 moves.

Meanwhile, I had reduced my pace, but since the results among the leading group were very even, some four rounds before the finish there were still eight or nine contestants within an interval of one point.

I was pinning my hopes on the finish, but in the 12th round I noticed that my opponent, Hort, had a shocking cold, and I decided not to torment him for long. I won my last three games, the first as follows:



**Tal – Ljubojević**
*Wijk aan Zee, 1973*

**14 c5 ♕xd4 15 ♖e4 ♗xf3 16 gxf3 ♘h3+ 17 ♔g2 ♕xc5 18 ♔xh3 ♕h5 19 ♘f1 ♘e5 20 ♔g2 g5 21 ♗g3 ♖ad8 22 ♗xe5 ♖xd1 23 ♖xd1 g4 24 fxg4 ♕g6 25 f3 ♗xe5 26 ♖xe5 e6 27 ♘g3 ♕f6 28 ♖e2 ♖d8 29 ♘e4 ♕e7 30 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 31 ♖d2 ♕a5 32 ♖d7 ♕b4 33 h4 a5 34 g5 hxg5 35 hxg5 a4 36 g6 ♔g7 37 ♗xe6 ♕xb2+ 38 ♔h3 ♔xg6 39 ♗xf7+ ♔h6 40 ♖d6+ ♔g7 41 ♖d7 b5 42 ♗e6+ ♔g6 43 ♖d8 c5 44 ♖g8+ ♔h7 45 ♘g5+ ♔h6 46 ♘f7+ ♔h7 47 ♖g5 1-0**

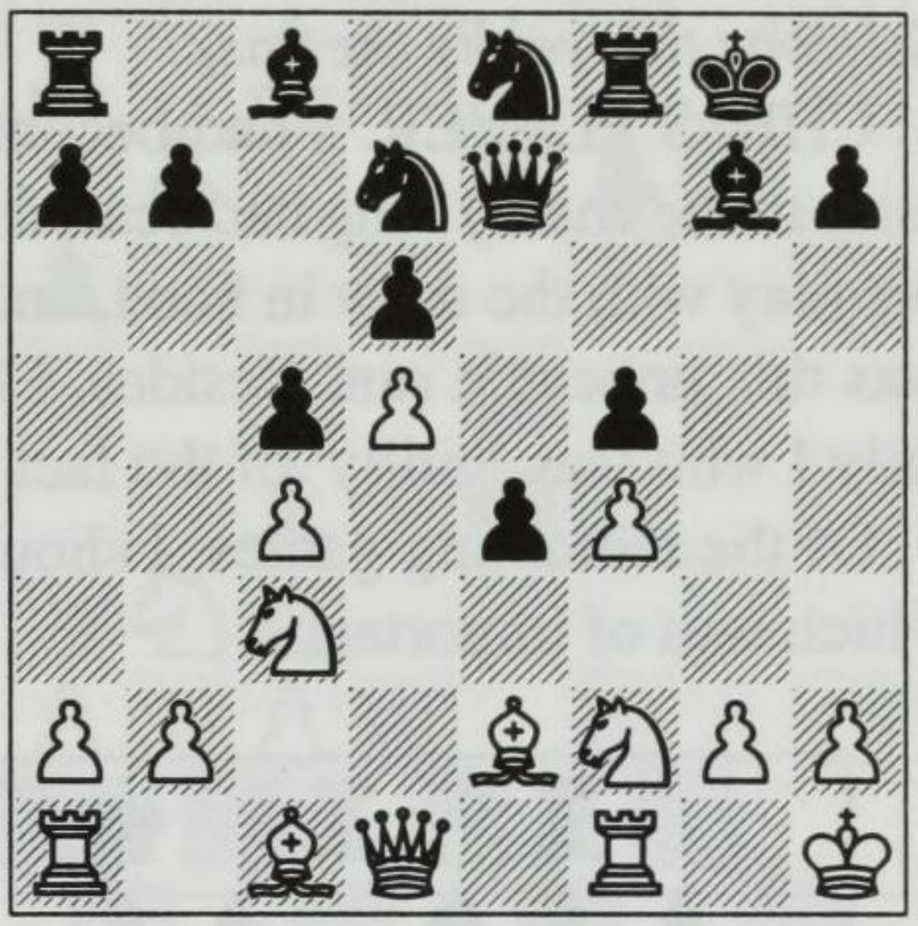
Before the start of the last round, Balashov was level with me, and the newspapers were already saying that the two Russians would draw, and thereby assure themselves of a share of first place. However, we both played for a win, and I alone was successful.

On the way home we stayed on for a short time in Holland, appearing before chess fans, and then a few days after my return there began a tournament which I consider to be one of my best during the last few years. It was the traditional Tallinn Tournament, the third in number.

Its popularity had grown, and on this occasion the list of Soviet players was even more impressive. For the first time Spassky and Polugaevsky were playing, as well as Keres, Bronstein, Tal, and other well-known players. From my

initial wins I can pick out two examples of squeezes in more or less positional style.

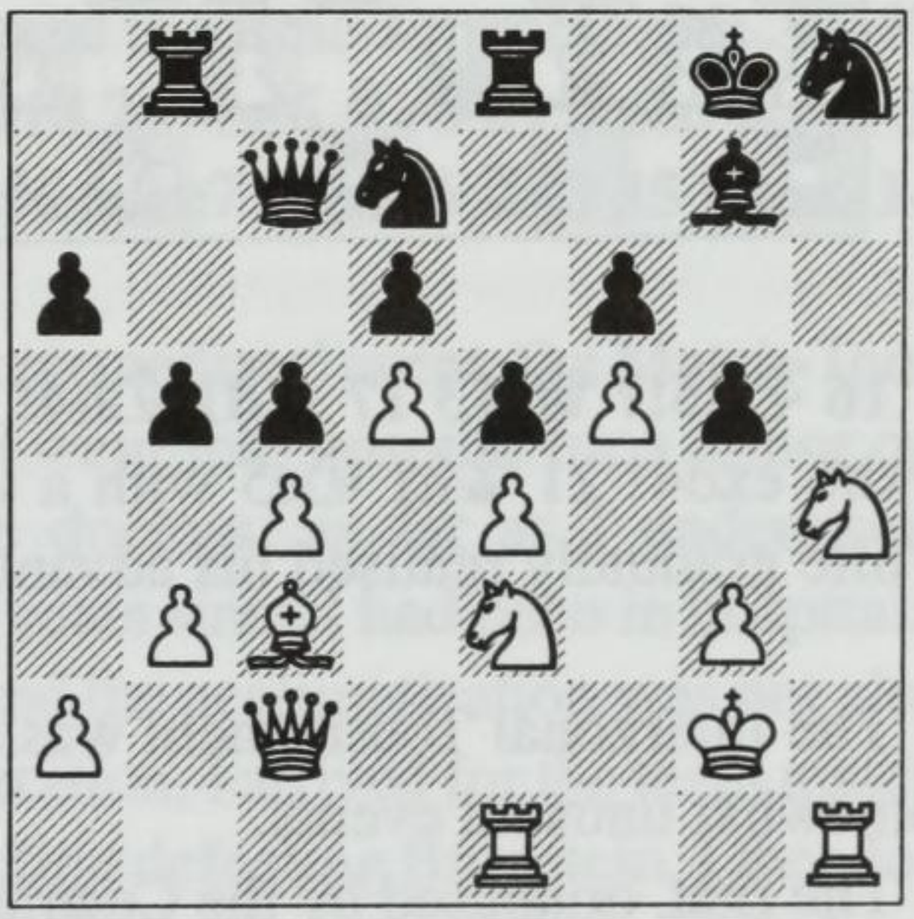
*B*



**Timman – Tal**
*Tallinn 1973*

**14...♗xc3! 15 bxc3 ♘df6 16 ♗e3 ♔h8 17 h3 ♖g8 18 ♕d2 ♘g7 19 ♘d1 ♘gh5 20 ♗xh5 ♘xh5 21 ♗f2 ♗d7 22 ♗e1 ♖af8! 23 ♘e3 ♕f6 24 ♔h2 ♕h6 25 g3 ♖f6 26 ♖g1 ♖fg6 27 ♖g2 ♘xf4! 28 gxf4 ♕xf4+ 29 ♔g1 ♕f3 30 ♕f2 ♕xh3 31 ♖b1 f4 32 ♖b2 f3 0-1**

*W*



**Tal – Saidy**
*Tallinn 1973*

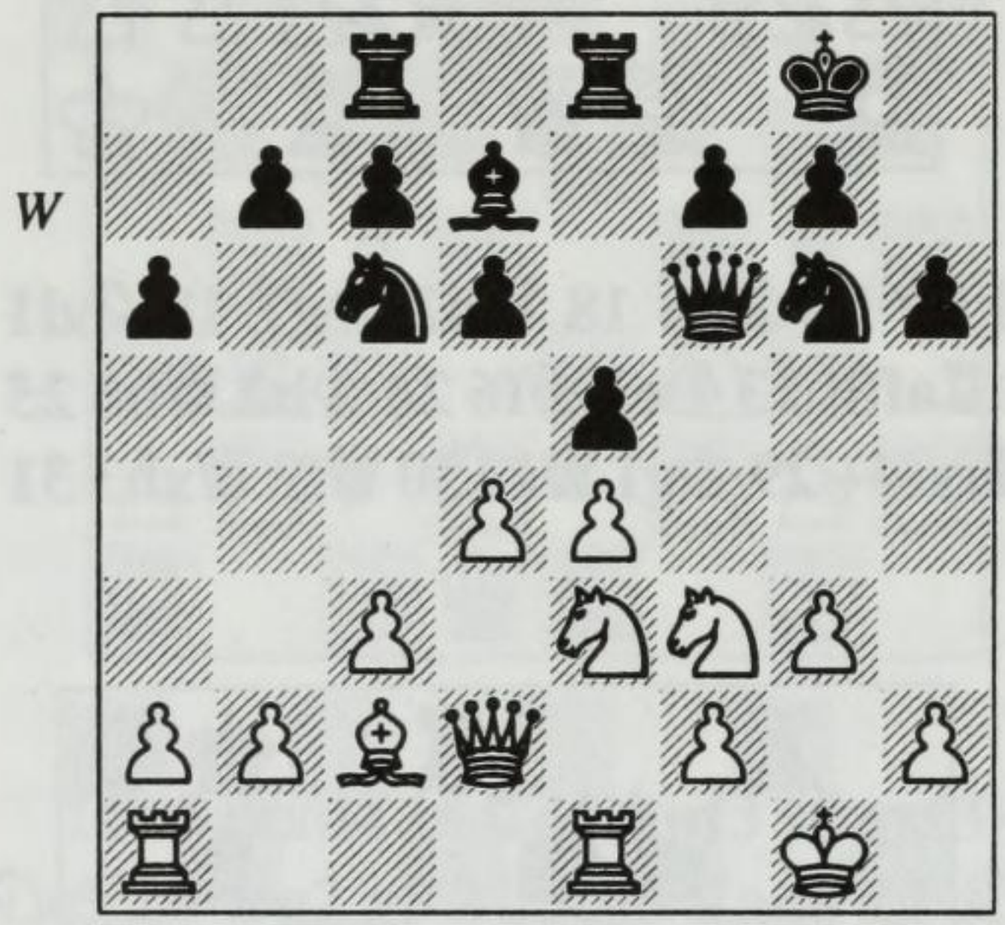
**27 ♘g6! ♘xg6 28 fxg6 ♘f8 29 ♕e2 ♘xg6 30 ♘f5 ♘e7 31 ♘h6+ ♗xh6 32 ♖xh6 ♔g7 33 ♕h5 ♖h8 34 ♖h1 ♖xh6 35 ♕xh6+ ♔f7 36 ♕h5+ ♔g7 37 ♕h7+ ♔f8 38 ♕h8+ ♘g8 39 ♖h7 1-0**

In the second half of the tournament my combinative play was successful, and in attacking style I defeated Westerinen and, in an important game for me, Spassky (both of these games are given here).

JOURNALIST. *This was the fifth successive tournament that you had gone through without losing. It was said in the press that you were approaching a hundred games without defeat, and that you had become a new, more harmonious Tal. Was this really the case?*

CHESS PLAYER. I had become not new, but more 'old'. Of course, giving mate to the enemy king had ceased to be an end in itself. But even at that time I did not play with the draw in hand, and, to be honest, the thing that least worried me was this unbeaten run. Besides, I had been in dubious positions, and it was not only I who was 'guilty' of the fact that I got away with them.

Of the remaining games, I should like to mention the following, the result of which was of importance.



**Tal – Keres**
*Tallinn, 1973*

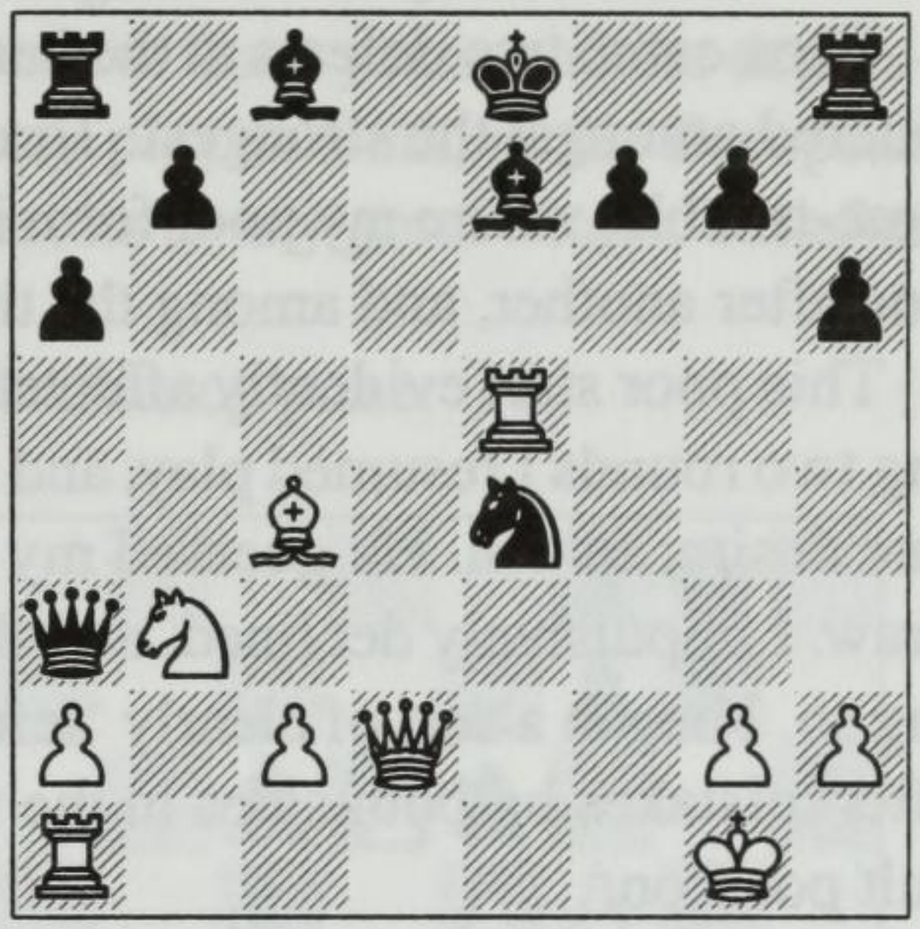
**16 ♘d5!? ♕xf3 17 ♗d1 ♘h4! 18 gxh4 ♕h3 19 ♘f6+! ♔h8?** 19...gxf6 20 ♕xh6 exd4! 21 ♔h1 ♘e5 with a very sharp game. **20 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 21 h5**, and White gradually realised his advantage of the exchange.

The Interzonal Tournament was approaching, but prior to it I took part in two somewhat unusual events.

The first, organised by the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League, was a tournament of Pioneers' Palaces. I had last played for my Palace in Riga exactly 15 years previously, and here I was, once again amongst the lads. Each team was led by a former pupil, now Grandmaster: Smyslov, Spassky, Petrosian, Karpov, Bronstein, myself ... we gave simultaneous displays with clocks against the lads from the other teams, and then added together the points gained by each captain and his team. At the same time there was a separate event for the team captains.

Each morning I would meet my lads, and talk to them about the day's 'examiner', and I breathed for myself the air of chess youth. It was all splendid!

In the captain's competition I came first, and here is one of the games, against the young Candidate Master Zaid.



**Tal – Zaid**
*Moscow 1973*

**19 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 20 ♕d5+ ♔g6** If 20...♔f8, then 21 ♖xe4, when 21...♕d6 fails to 22 ♖f1+. **21 ♕xe4+ ♔f7 22 ♖f1+ ♗f6 23 ♘c5** It would have been stronger to have included 23 ♕d5+, but I had not foreseen my young opponent's brilliant defence. **23...♖e8!! 24 ♕d5+** On 24 ♖xf6+ Black would have replied not 24...gxf6 25 ♕h7+ with mate in three moves, but 24...♔xf6! **24...♔f8 25 ♕d6+ ♔f7 26 ♘xb7?!** This part of the game was played in a time-scramble. **26...♕a4?!** Better 26...♗xb7 27 ♕xa3 ♖xe5. **27 ♕d5+ ♔f8 28 ♘d6 ♗e6 29 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 30 ♕xe6 ♕d4+ 31 ♔h1 ♕a7 32 ♘f5 ♕f7 33 ♕d6+ ♗e7 34 ♕c6 ♖d8 35 ♕xa6 1-0**

There was still some time before the last 'intermediate' event, the Match-Tournament between the three USSR teams, and I went into hospital for a minor operation. It was not at all essential, and the doctors, as far as I understood, performed it 'just in case'. It was all but four years since I had been in hospital. I had grown unaccustomed to this 'pleasure', and the acclimatisation was not altogether successful. When, straight after the operation, I arrived for the team match, my unbeaten run came to an abrupt end. After first defeating Bronstein, I then lost twice to Balashov. In these games he played better than I did, but I paid little attention to this warning. After all, I had never made much of this famous run, and when it came to an end I said jokingly:

'Fine! Now I can start a new one...'

But the new run began, unfortunately, somewhat later, after the Interzonal Tournament. It is difficult to decide exactly why it happened, but at the start of the Interzonal I played extremely badly. I can reproach myself only for the fact that I did not realise it immediately, although the very first game should have warned

me. I was satisfied with the result, a draw as Black against Smejkal, but in the course of the game I missed a spectacular but by no means difficult combination, which would have given me somewhat the better chances.

Then came two defeats at the hands of players who could by no means be considered amongst the strongest: Torre and Estevez. I played unevenly and got into time-trouble, where my poor form immediately showed itself. Blunders followed one after another, and among the things I overlooked was a mate!

This poor start evidently affected my delicate kidney, and I fell ill. After missing two rounds I resumed play, and went into the game against Korchnoi with just one desire: to win. He guessed my state of mind, and around move ten offered a draw. I impulsively declined, and then began seeking an objective reason for doing so. I began a sort of clearly 'left-sided' plan, got into an inferior position, and after mistakes by both sides in the time-scramble, adjourned the game in a difficult position.

Next I lost to Hübner in a game where I stood better at one point, but then adjourned several games with winning chances, and did not as yet lose my optimism.

I was nevertheless playing 'creakily', with difficulty, and this led to my amassing 6(!!) adjourned games: a difficult position against Korchnoi, and better positions, as I thought, against Kuzmin, Karpov and Tukmakov, as well as against Quinteros and Cuellar. If they were all to end up as I was planning, then all would not yet be lost in the tournament. But the resumption brought a serious correction, since it was impossible to analyse all the positions anything like thoroughly. We managed this only in the game against Tukmakov, finding a win at around three in the morning, and merely made a superficial acquaintance with the others.

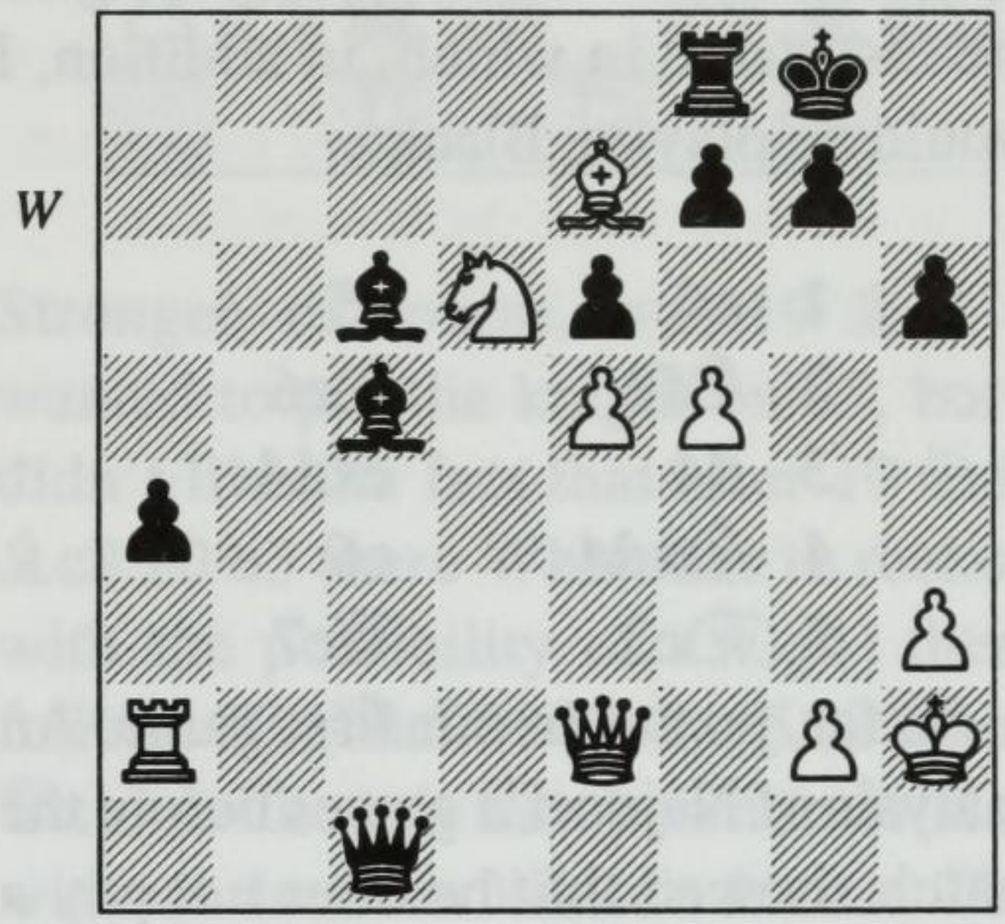
The resumption began with the game against Korchnoi, where a loss was more or less planned. Then came Kuzmin, and I suddenly saw that in my nocturnal analysis (at about 5 a.m.) I had made two moves in a row for myself(!!) which, of course, one could not count on doing in an official situation. I should have agreed a draw, but I thought for about forty minutes, and then, just at the point when I was ready to conclude peace, Kotov, the chief controller came up and informed me that Tukmakov had resigned without playing on. The thought flashed through my mind that if I were to draw with Kuzmin now, I would then have to play on against Karpov, and my adjournment analysis had not gone as far as that position. So I decided to continue, and played on ... to a hopeless position.

Following this, my results had no significance for me. Even a successful second half of the tournament, with 6½ out of 9, (the games played against Larsen and Gligorić during this time are given here) only enabled me to finish high enough to take the last prize.

Strange as it may seem, I was grieved by the fact that my best game, which was awarded a special prize, should have been against Larsen, with whom I sympathised, and who I very much wanted to see amongst the winners.

Thus all my ambitious plans had to be shelved for three years, and the depression which set in after the Interzonal told on my play in Bath, in the European Team Championship. This did not affect my results to any great extent, but after two wins came a series of four draws.

The following combination was awarded a brilliancy prize.




**Botterill – Tal**
*European Team Championship, Bath 1973*

Here White sealed the move **42 ♗xf8** and Black was afforded a curious opportunity to force a win. Incidentally, nothing is gained by the straightforward 42...♗g1+ 43 ♔g3 ♕c3+ 44 ♔h4, when Black has to waste a tempo in capturing the white bishop, which is taking no part in the play. **42...♗e3!** The threat is 43...♗f4+, and 43 ♖a1 ♗g1+ followed by 44...♕xa1 is hopeless for White, and so: **43 ♔g3 ♗g5!** This bishop has a great future; if 44 ♕f2, to defend against the threatened 44...♕f4 mate, then 44...♗h4+. **44 ♕c4** On 44 ♕g4 h5 45 ♕d4, 45...♕e1+ 46 ♔h2 ♗e3 is convincing enough. **44...♕e3+ 45 ♔g4 ♗h4!** The last move by this bishop simultaneously creating two mating threats. **46 ♗e7** 46 ♘xf7 is strikingly refuted by 46...♕g3+ 47 ♔h5 ♗e8! **46...♗xe7 47 ♘xf7** 47 ♕xc6 h5+. **47...h5+ 48 ♔xh5 ♗e8 49 ♔g4 exf5+ 50 ♔xf5 g6+** Here Botterill smiled: evidently he also found the finish amusing. After **51 ♔g4 ♗d7+**, **White resigned (0-1)**

In the last round, in order to take first place on my board, I had to beat the Hungarian master Csom, but I did not manage to do this, although we played on much longer than all the other competitors.

## Game 81
## Tal – Najdorf
*USSR v Rest of the World, Belgrade 1970*
Sicilian Defence

Of course, in such a short match I had to win the third game at all costs. I could not afford to stake everything on the last game in which, in addition, I would be playing Black[1].

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **c5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **♘c6** |
| **3** | **d4** | **cxd4** |
| **4** | **♘xd4** | **e6** |
| **5** | **♘c3** | **♕c7** |

So far, just as in our first game. An analysis of Najdorf's games before the match showed that he does not pay a great deal of attention to theory, at least he does not make a scrupulous study of it. In the main, Najdorf, like myself, tends to check variations at the board, while the clock is ticking.

In the 37th USSR Championship, White, as a rule, gained good positions using a rather old-fashioned system involving the fianchetto of his light-squared bishop, a system which in recent years has gained a new lease of life. Although in theoretical reviews it is often stated that Black can obtain a comfortable game, it is usually White who gets a good game. I decided to adopt this system.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **6** | **g3** | **a6** |

Of course, not as in the well-known game Fischer-Tal (Bled, 1961) in which Black absent-mindedly played 6...♘f6 and after 7 ♘db5 straight away found himself in a difficult position. Now everyone knows about this.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **7** | **♗g2** | **♘f6** |
| **8** | **0-0** | **d6** |

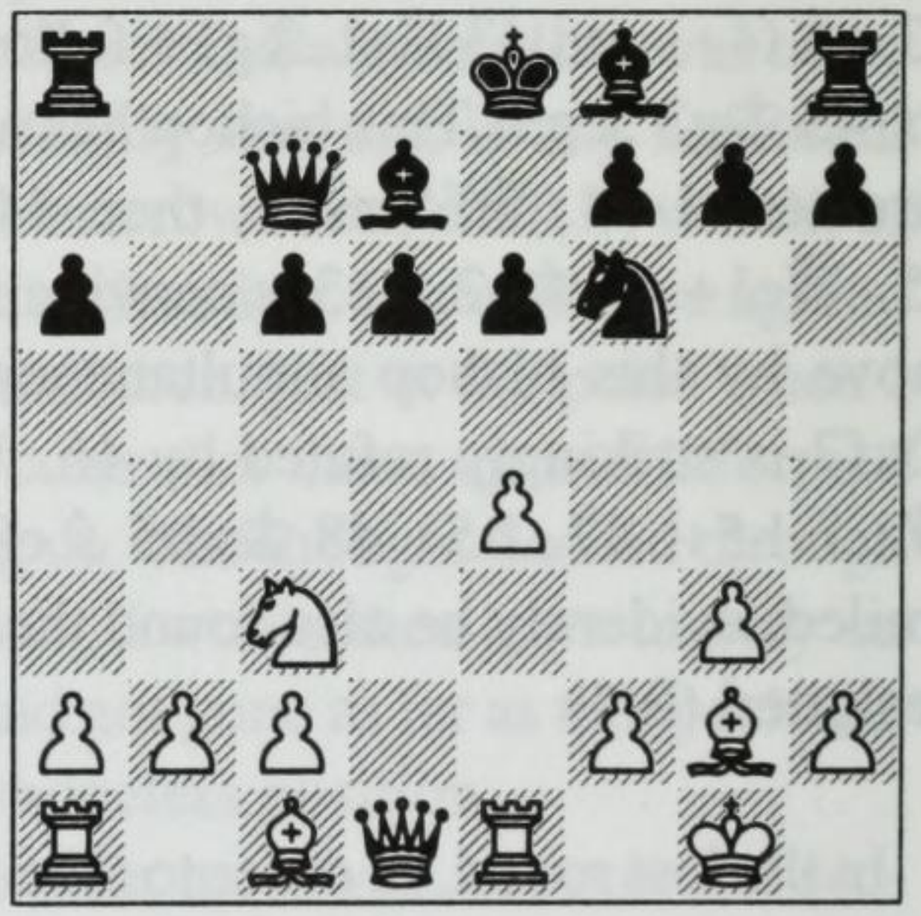
An important finesse. Until recently Black normally played 8...♗e7 and after 9 ♖e1 d6, possible is 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 e5 dxe5 12 ♖xe5 0-0 13 ♗f4 when 13...♗d6 fails to 14 ♖xe6!. The move order adopted by Najdorf denies White this possibility.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **9** | **♖e1** | **♗d7** |
| **10** | **♘xc6** | |

A move which makes sense only in conjunction with the following manoeuvre.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **10** | **...** | **bxc6** *(D)* |

On 10...♗xc6, 11 ♘d5 is good for White.




1 After the 2nd round, Najdorf was leading Tal in their individual match by 1½-½, having won in round 2 – *Editor's note*.

**11 ♘a4 e5**

The first of a series of inaccuracies, which soon put Black in a difficult position. Significantly stronger was 11...♖b8 12 c4 c5 so as to prevent the advance of the c-pawn.

**12 c4 ♗e7**

Once again carelessly played. 12...c5 was essential, agreeing to a weakening of the d5-square as being the lesser evil.

**13 c5 0-0**

Black could have attempted to change the course of events by 13...d5 but this appears insufficient after 14 exd5 cxd5 15 ♘b6 (or 14...♘xd5 15 ♗xd5 exd5 16 ♘b6).

**14 cxd6 ♗xd6**

**15 ♗g5**

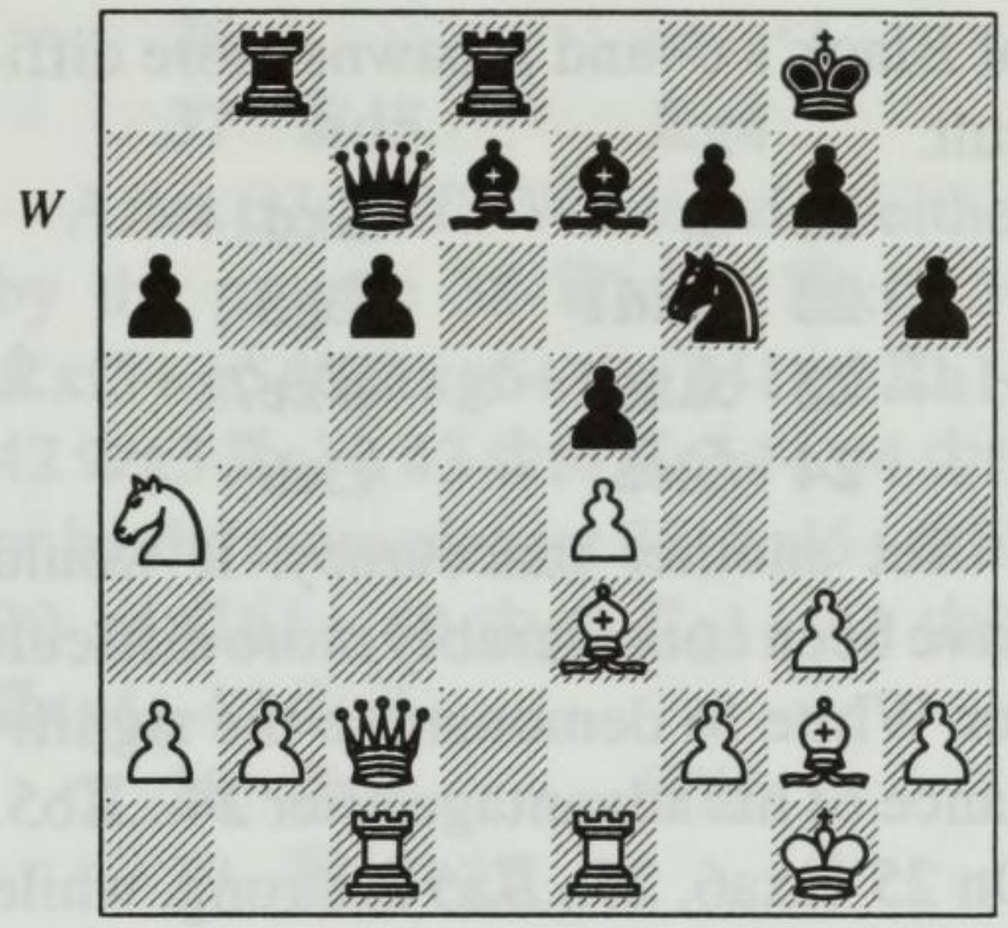
White has an undisputed positional advantage, since Black has no compensation for his weaknesses on the queenside. However, assuming that the position would win itself, I conducted the following stage of the game in routine fashion. This move is an inaccuracy. As will soon become clear, 15 ♗e3 was stronger.

**15 ... ♗e7**

**16 ♕c2 h6**

**17 ♗e3 ♖ab8**

**18 ♖ac1 ♖fd8** *(D)*




At this point I thought for a long time, being unable to decide which piece to move to c5: the knight or the bishop. Both were tempting, but since White in the end decided to exchange off the dark-squared bishops, his next move was simply a waste of time. Stronger, of course, was 19 ♗c5. I wanted to put the knight on c5, but I didn't like the fact that after 19 ♘c5 ♗c8 20 h3 (here White has to reckon with the possibility of ...♘g4) there follows 20...♕a5 21 b3 ♗xc5 22 ♕xc5 ♕xa2, although this position is also without doubt in White's favour. The unfortunate move in the game gives Black the chance of gaining counterplay.

**19 h3 ♘h7!**

It becomes clear that the pawn on h3 will become an object of attack after ...♘g5. The intended route for this knight is ...♘g5, ...♘e6 and, if possible, ...♘d4.

**20 ♗c5**

White returns to the correct plan, but after a certain delay. Now on 20 ♘c5 there could have followed 20...♗xc5 21 ♗xc5 ♘g5.

**20 ... ♗e8**

**21 ♖ed1**

White goes in for exchanges, assuming that a reduction in the number of fighting units will make the defence

of Black's c- and a-pawns more difficult.

**21 ... ♖xd1+**
**22 ♖xd1 ♘g5**
**23 ♗xe7 ♕xe7**
**24 ♘c5 ♘e6**

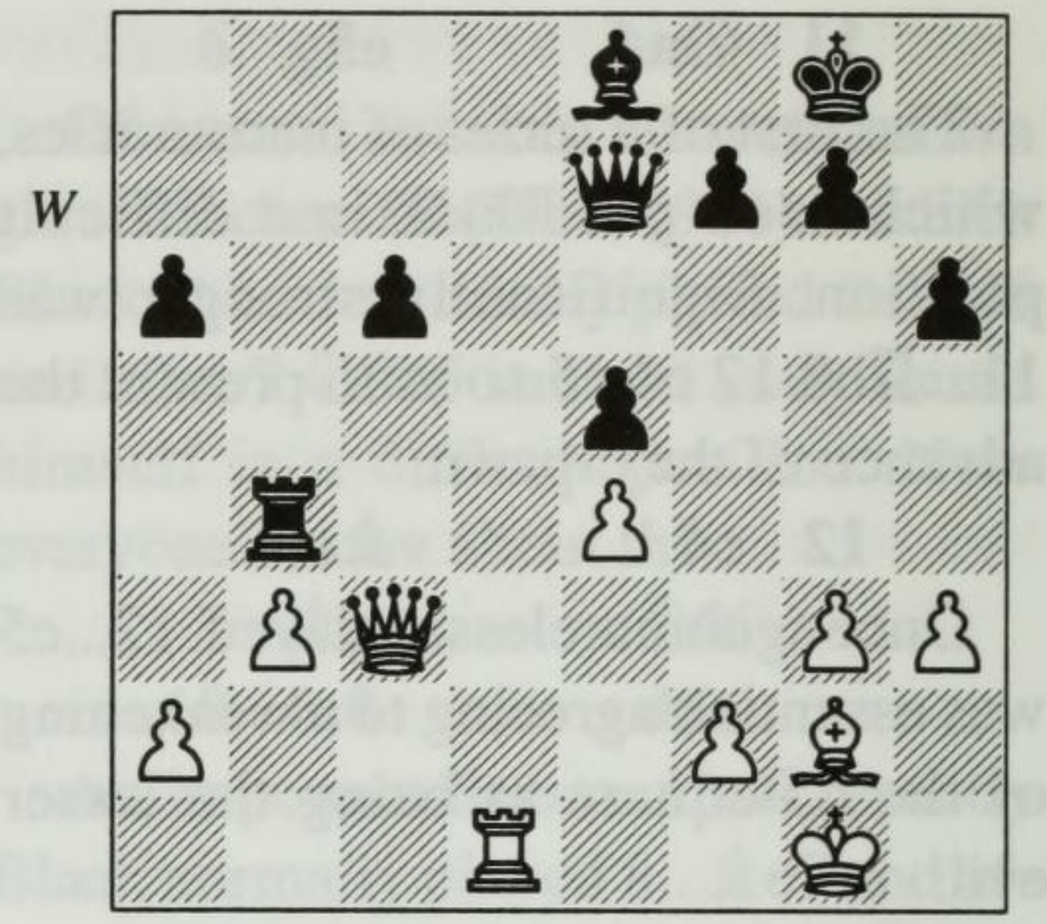
Yet another inaccuracy. It would have been considerably more difficult for White to demonstrate the significance of his advantage after 24...♖b5. On 25 ♘xa6, 25...♖a5 is strong, while after 25 ♖c1 ♘e6 26 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 27 b3 Black has at his disposal the useful rook manoeuvre 27...♖b4 28 ♗f1 ♖d4, when once again the pawn on h3 prevents White from switching over to a siege of the queenside pawns. White certainly keeps a positional advantage, but I think in this case Black's defensive chances would have been significantly better.

**25 ♘xe6 ♕xe6**
**26 b3 ♕e7**
**27 ♕c3**

At this point I considered my position to be won, because on 27...♕c7 (otherwise 28 ♕a5 decides the game) White transfers his bishop to f1, where it is excellently placed, but the Argentinean Grandmaster finds an interesting tactical resource.

**27 ... ♖b4!** *(D)*

For the moment this prevents the bishop move. In the case of 28 a3 Black can continue 28...♖d4, since White's a-pawn is then attacked. Once again White thought for a long time, but on this occasion succeeded in finding the strongest continuation.




**28 h4!**

The one drawback to the move 27...♖b4 lies in the fact that it weakens the back rank. The direct attempt to exploit this weakening by 28 ♖d3 a5 29 ♕d2 a4 30 ♖d8 does not produce anything tangible. With the move in the game White brings his bishop into play. This was the main variation which I considered: 28...a5 29 a3 ♖b8 (29...♖d4 is now bad because of 30 ♖xd4 exd4 31 ♕xa5) 30 ♕xa5 ♖xb3 31 ♖d8, and now 31...♔f8 32 ♗h3 ♖xa3 33 ♕b6 or 31...♔h7 32 ♕a8 ♗d7 33 h5.

**28 ... f6**

More stubborn was 28...h5 and 29...g6, but passive defence is not Najdorf's style. After the move in the game the light squares are weakened still further.

**29 ♖d3**

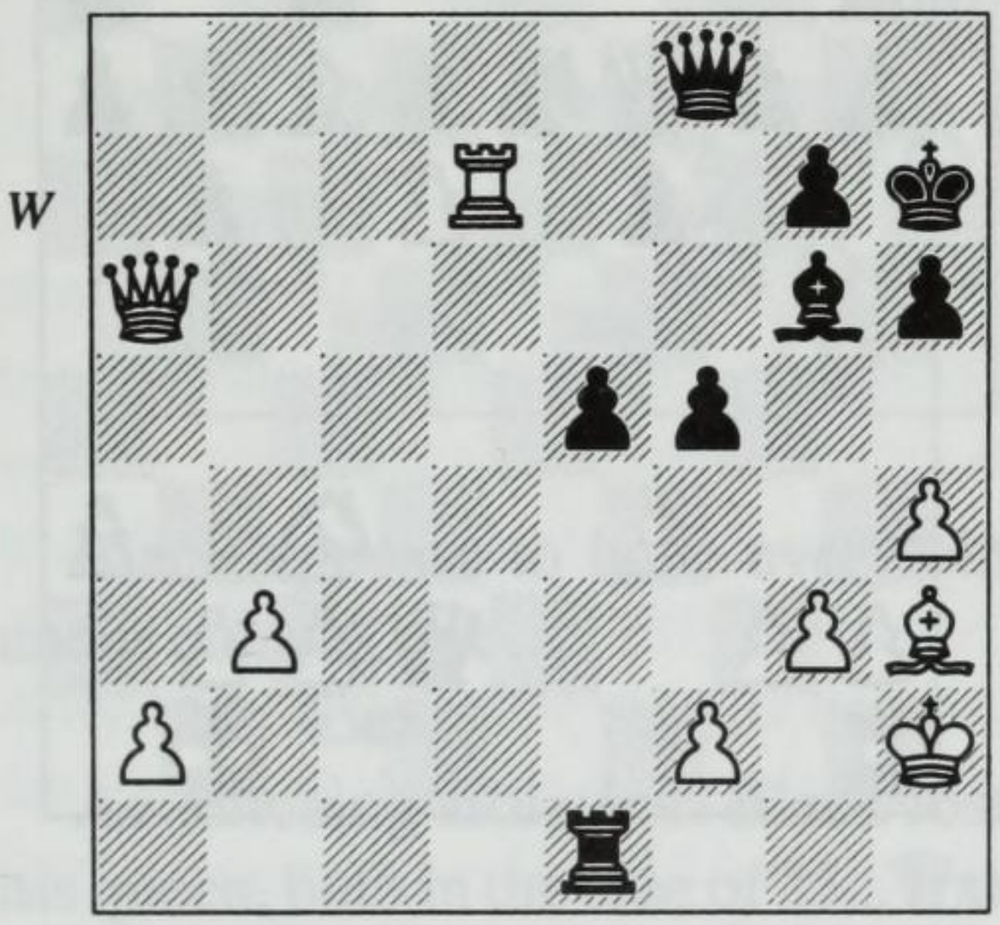
White proceeds with the execution of the plan involving the doubling of heavy pieces on the d-file. Since the attempt to cut the Gordian knot by 29...c5 30 ♖d5 c4 is met by the tactical

rejoinder 31 a3! ♖xb3 32 ♕xc4, the pawn sacrifice made by Najdorf is forced.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **29** | **...** | **♔h7** |
| **30** | **♗h3** | **♗g6** |
| **31** | **♖d7** | **♕f8** |
| **32** | **♕xc6** | **♖xe4** |
| **33** | **♕xa6** | **♖e1+** |
| **34** | **♔h2** | **f5** *(D)* |

On 34...♗e4 would have been met by 35 ♗g2. The attempt to set the e-pawn immediately in motion (34...e4) meets a tactical refutation: 35 h5 ♗xh5 36 ♕a5.

34...h5 was perhaps best.



**35 ♖d6**

White could have played 35 ♕a5 ♖e2 36 ♖d2, but he sets a trap into which his opponent falls.

**35 ... ♗h5**

This is what I was hoping for. On 35...♕f7 White would have continued 36 ♕a5.

**36 ♕d3**

Now it becomes clear that White's kingside attack is very dangerous.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **36** | **...** | **e4** |
| **37** | **♕d5** | **♗g4** |

After 37...♗f3 White wins either by the prosaic 38 ♕xf5+ ♕xf5 39 ♗xf5+ g6 40 ♗xg6+ ♔g7 41 g4 ♖h1+ 42 ♔g3 ♖g1+ 43 ♔f4 ♖xg4+ 44 ♔f5 or by the more elegant 38 ♗xf5+ ♔h8 39 g4 ♖h1+ 40 ♔g3 ♖g1+ 41 ♔f4 ♖xg4+ 42 ♔e3.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **38** | **♖d8** | **♕f6** |
| **39** | **♕g8+?** | |

Here I had very little time left, and decided to give a few checks. After 39 h5! Black would have had to resign immediately.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **39** | **...** | **♔g6** |
| **40** | **♕e8+** | **♔h7** |

Here 41 h5 is less clear because of 41...♗xh5. This wasn't so on the previous occasion, since mate by ♗xf5+ was threatened.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **41** | **♗xg4** | **fxg4** |
| **42** | **♕g8+** | **♔g6** |
| **43** | **♖f8** | |

Here the game was adjourned, but Najdorf resigned without resuming play. On 43...♕e7 (the sealed move), 44 ♖e8 decides.

**1-0**

Game 82

**Tal – Kolarov**

*European Team Championship, Kapfenberg 1970*

Caro-Kann Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **c6** |
| **2** | **d4** | **d5** |
| **3** | **♘c3** | **g6** |

This is sometimes played instead of 3...dxe4 but usually it simply leads to a transposition of moves.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **4** | **♘f3** | **♗g7** |
| **5** | **h3** | **dxe4** |
| **6** | **♘xe4** | **♘d7** |
| **7** | **♗c4** | **♘gf6** |
| **8** | **♘xf6+** | **♘xf6** |
| **9** | **0-0** | **0-0** |
| **10** | **♖e1** | |

Here the rook will always come in handy.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **10** | **...** | **♗f5** |

The beginning of a rather extravagant manoeuvre.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **11** | **♘e5** | **♗e4** |
| **12** | **♗g5** | **♗d5** |
| **13** | **♗d3** | |

The bishop on d5 occupies a rather unusual, but by no means bad, position. Perhaps Black should have played 13...b5, so as to assure the bishop of its post. True, in this case a weakness appears on c6, but how to exploit it – I don't know. 13...♕d6 was also not bad.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **13** | **...** | **♗e6** |

In the resulting position this is not the best square for the bishop.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **14** | **c3** | **♘d7** |

Knowing my weakness for sacrifices, Kolarov gives me the opportunity to make one on g6.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **15** | **♘f3** | |

I make it clear that I intend to sacrifice, not a piece on g6, but the exchange on e6, which Black is unable to prevent.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **15** | **...** | **♖e8** |

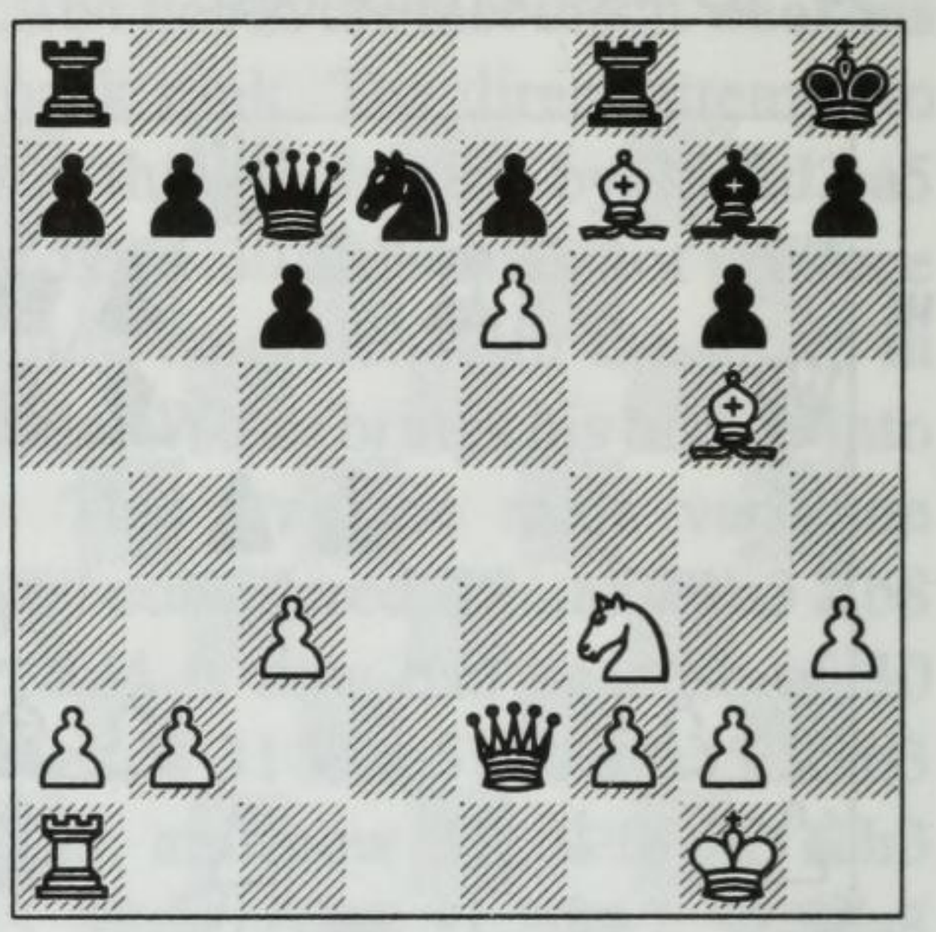
15...♘f6 was possibly better.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **16** | **♖xe6** | **fxe6** |
| **17** | **♕e2** | |

For the exchange White has obtained quite good attacking chances. Thus on 17...♘f8, possible is 18 ♘e5 or 18 ♖e1 with the subsequent advance of the h-pawn. Kolarov finds the best defence.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **17** | **...** | **e5** |
| **18** | **♗c4+** | **♔h8** |
| **19** | **dxe5** | **♕c7** |
| **20** | **♗f7** | **♖f8** |
| **21** | **e6** *(D)* | |

*B*



Black's position is still tenable. Here he should have played 21...♘e5 22 ♘xe5 ♗xe5, when 23 ♗xe7 fails to 23...♗h2+ 24 ♔h1 ♕xe7 with the threat of 25...♖xf7.

But Kolarov makes a mistake, after which the game can no longer be saved.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **21** | **...** | **♘f6** |
| **22** | **♕c4** | |

My opponent had not foreseen this reply. White threatens 23 ♕h4.

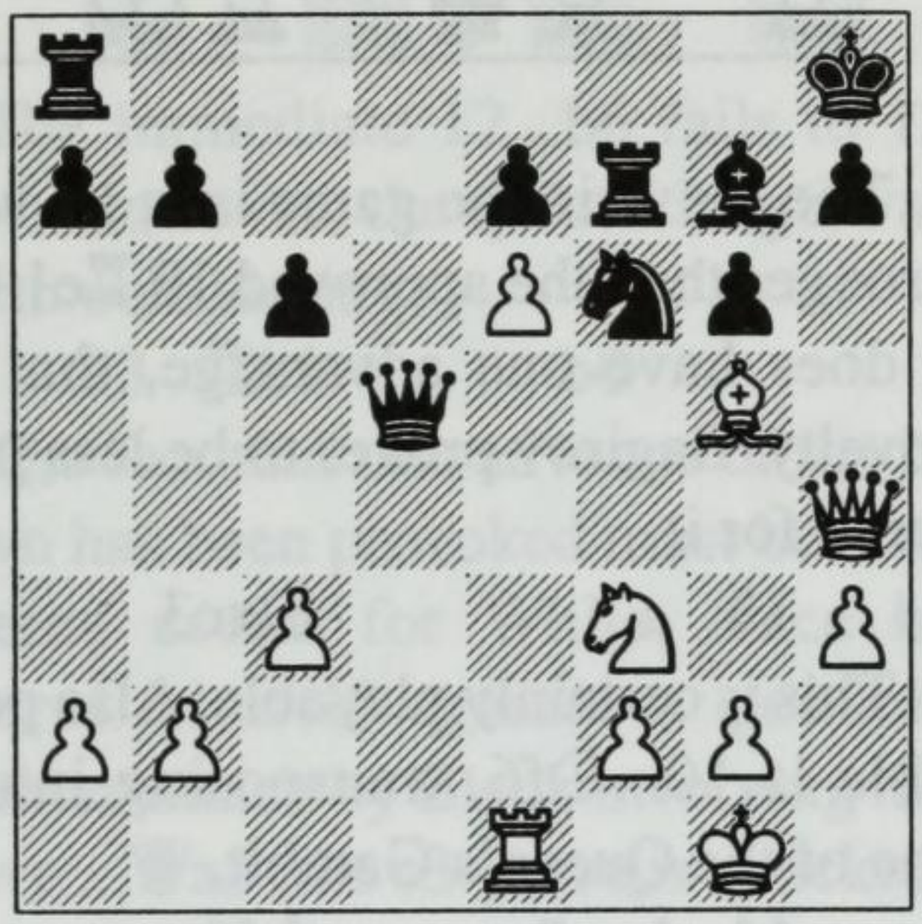
**22 ... ♕a5**

Here I almost played 23 ♕h4, intending on 23...♕f5 (the g-pawn is attacked) to continue 24 ♖e1, but at the last minute noticed that Black has a stronger line: 23...♖xf7 24 exf7 ♕d5.

**23 ♖e1 ♕d5**

Now I can continue my plan.

**24 ♕h4 ♖xf7** *(D)*



Black appears to have everything under control, but ...

**25 ♘e5**

An amusing situation: Black loses his queen, both in the case of 25...♕xe6 26 ♘xg6+, and after 25...♖7f8 26 ♘xg6+ ♔g8 27 ♘xe7+.

**25 ... ♘h5**
**26 ♘xf7+ ♔g8**
**27 ♗xe7 ♖e8**

At this point I was expecting Black's resignation rather than a move by him, and therefore, instead of 28 ♕b4, I unsuspectingly played ...

**28 ♘d6**

... and received a clever rejoinder in reply.

**28 ... ♗f6**

After the forced variation ...

**29 ♗xf6 ♕xd6**
**30 ♗g5 ♖xe6**
**31 ♕c4 ♘g7**

... I decided not to hurry with exchanges, and instead made the waiting move ...

**32 ♕b3**

... so as to exchange queens only in the case of 32...♕d5.

In time-trouble my opponent saved me from the necessity of demonstrating the technique of realising my advantage.

**32 ... ♔f8**
**33 ♖d1 ♕e5**
**34 ♗h6 ♖d6**
**35 ♖xd6 1-0**

## Game 83

### Tal – Bagirov

*Dnepropetrovsk 1970*

Caro-Kann Defence

**1 c4**

A little bit of sharp practice. In the previous game between us with the same colours, the Caro-Kann Defence occurred.

This time also White has nothing against repeating the Panov Attack, but with his first move rules out the possibility of Bagirov playing the Alekhine Defence, on the theory of which the Baku player works a great deal.

Besides the Caro-Kann, the Slav Defence is also in the Baku master's

opening repertoire, so his reply was easy to foresee.

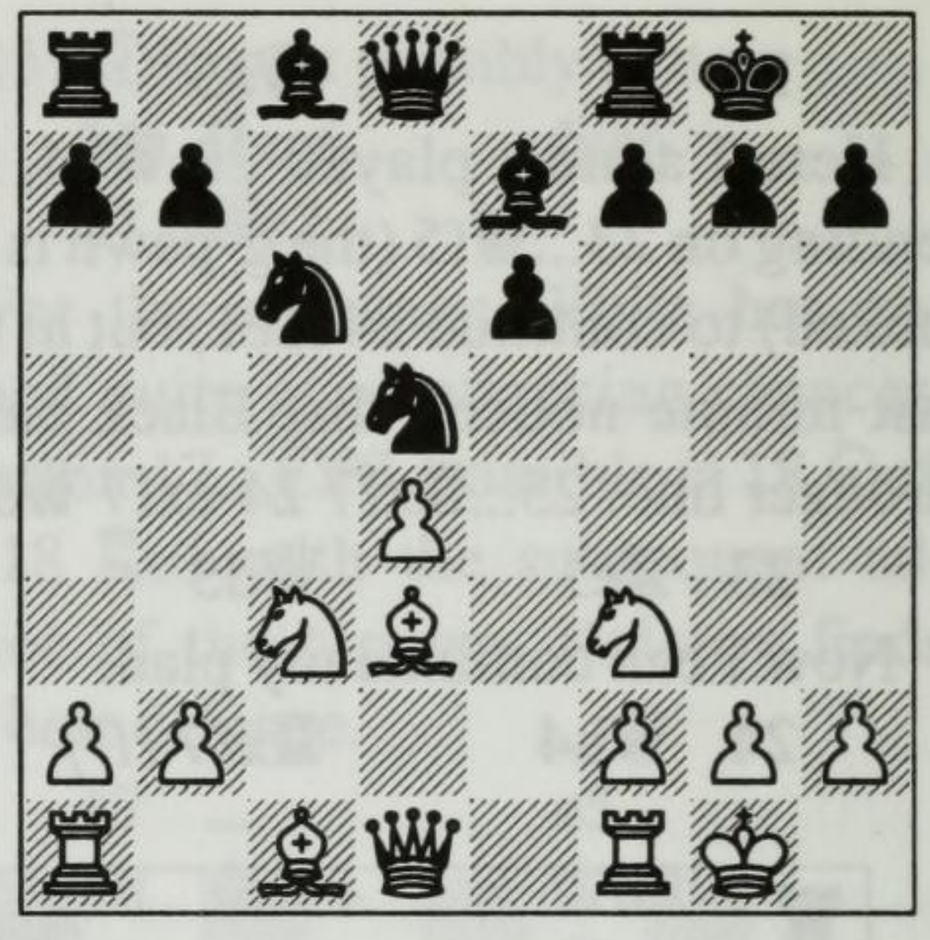
**1 ... c6**
**2 e4**

After the match Bagirov admitted that my second move had been a surprise to him, since he had not planned to play the Caro-Kann Defence (by transposition of moves the Panov Attack is reached).

**2 ... d5**
**3 exd5 cxd5**
**4 d4 ♘f6**
**5 ♘c3 e6**

Bagirov does not wish to repeat the experiment which worked successfully in the 36th USSR Championship against Polugaevsky, where the Baku player continued in this position 5...♘c6 6 ♗g5 ♕b6 7 cxd5 ♘xd4. After lengthy reflection Polugaevsky rejected the tempting and very strong move 8 ♘f3, but now this move could be expected, if only because after the game all the participants in the championship found out about it.

**6 ♘f3 ♗e7**
**7 cxd5 ♘xd5**
**8 ♗d3 ♘c6**
**9 0-0 0-0** *(D)*




This same position occurred between us in the USSR Peoples' Spartakiad in 1967. On that occasion I played 10 ♖e1, and after 10...♗f6 11 ♗e4 ♘ce7 Black obtained a reasonable position, although all through the game he had to overcome certain difficulties.

**10 a3**

The move in the game is in no way stronger than the approved 10 ♖e1 but it does have one advantage, that of novelty. Bagirov proves to be less prepared for it.

**10 ... ♘xc3**

This is certainly playable. Also possible is 10...♘f6, transposing into a line of the Queen's Gambit.

**11 bxc3 ♗f6**
**12 ♕e2**

On this move I spent a considerable time as it was essential to decide what plan to adopt. In place of the isolated d-pawn, an isolated pawn couple has appeared. One of the possible plans here is the advance of the central pawns. This can be done as follows: ♗b2, ♕e2, rooks on d1 and possibly c1, the bishop moves away from d3, and then, if feasible, c4 and d5. However, Black also has time to develop his forces: ...b6, ...♗b7, ...♘a5, controlling the d5-square, and possibly organising counterplay along the c-file. Therefore White makes the non-committal move 12 ♕e2 which is

useful for the harmonious development of the heavy artillery, and also for active operations on the kingside. In passing, White sets a little trap: if Black tries to free himself by 12...e5 White is not limited to the win of a pawn by 13 dxe5 ♘xe5 14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 16 ♕h5+ but can play the stronger 15 ♕e4 g6 16 ♕xe5 ♕xd3 17 ♗h6, which wins.

**12 ... ♗d7**

The immediate 12...b6 fails to 13 ♕e4. However, the quiet 12...g6 was worth considering.

**13 ♖b1 b6**

The fact that this advance of the b-pawn has been provoked must be considered useful for White, since he insures himself against a possible counter-attack by Black involving the move ...♕a5 (the c3-pawn is attacked, and in some cases the queen can be transferred to the kingside).

**14 ♖e1**

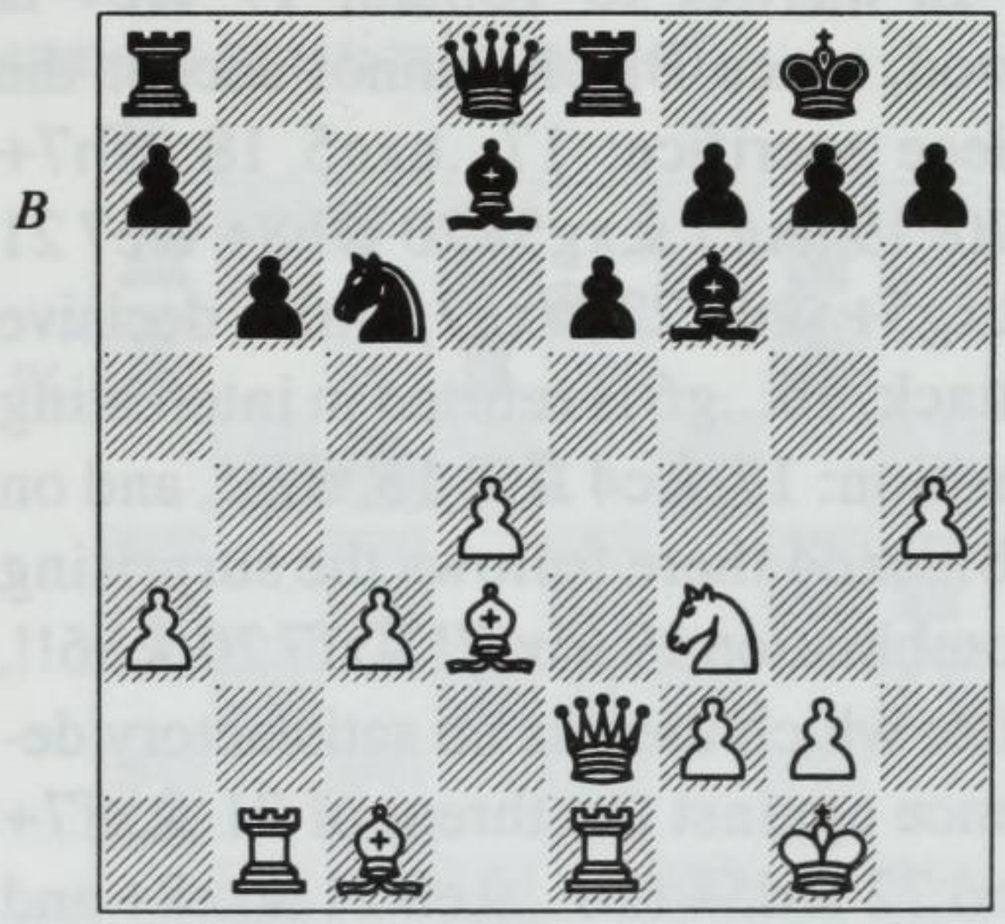
In this position White thought for some time over the consequences of 14 h4. But what I didn't like was 14...♘e7 (capturing on h4 naturally fails to 15 ♕e4) with the possible variation 15 ♘g5 ♘f5! Now 16 g4 is too dangerous in view of 16...♘xh4 17 ♘xh7 ♗c6 when it is Black who has a very strong attack.

After the text-move, it is by no means easy for Black to solve the problem of how to develop his pieces. On 14...♘e7, 15 ♘e5, transposing into positional lines, is possible (♗d2, ♖bd1 etc.).

**14 ... ♖e8**

On 14...e5!? White, if he wants to fight for the initiative, is bound to capture the pawn: 15 dxe5 ♘xe5 16 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 17 ♗xh7+ (not 17 ♕xe5 ♖e8) 17...♔xh7 18 ♕h5+ and 19 ♖xe5. However, it is a long way to a draw in this position, since the heavy pieces are still present, while the black king's shelter leaves much to be desired. Bagirov wishes to carry out the freeing pawn advance under more favourable circumstances, but now some rather amusing complications arise almost by force.

**15 h4** *(D)*




Once again, of course, capturing the h-pawn is out of the question because of 16 ♕e4. White plans to continue ♘g5 with an attack. Here 15...♘e7 appears less attractive because of 16 ♘e5, and the weakening of f7 tells: the thematic combination ♗xh7+ etc. is threatened.

However, the move 15 h4 appears to be very double-edged, and therefore

Black's traditional decision – to answer a flank diversion with a counter-blow in the centre – is perfectly natural.

**15 ... e5**

This was the continuation to which White devoted most attention. Now he has to act very energetically, otherwise Black will seize the initiative and his counter-attack can develop very quickly.

**16 ♘g5 exd4**

Consistent and quite good, although to a certain extent forced. The exchange 16...♗xg5 would have given White a very strong attack after 17 ♗xg5 followed by ♕h5.

In answer to 16...h6, 17 ♕e4 is good, since Black cannot accept the piece sacrifice: 17...hxg5 18 ♕h7+ ♔f8 19 hxg5 ♗xg5? 20 ♕h8+ ♔e7 21 ♗xg5+ ♔d6 22 ♕xg7, with a decisive attack. 16...g6 is refuted in interesting fashion: 17 ♗c4 ♖f8 18 ♕f3!, and on 18...exd4 there follows the surprising combination 19 ♘xf7! ♖xf7 20 ♗h6!!, after which there is no satisfactory defence against the threat of 21 ♗xf7+ and 22 ♕d5+ (20...♗e8 21 ♖xe8+ and 22 ♕xf6; 20...♘e5 21 ♖xe5).

**17 ♗xh7+ ♔f8**

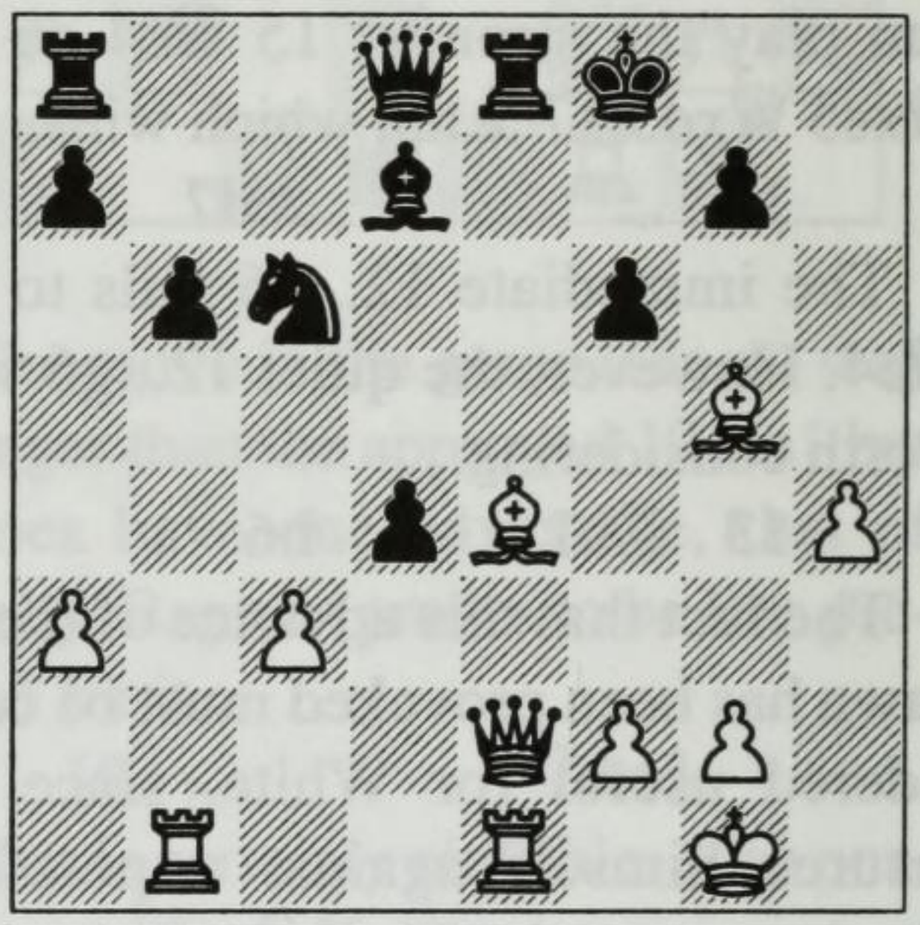
**18 ♗e4**

The first impression is that the white pieces are somewhat 'hanging', and that since White's queen is unpleasantly pinned Black will have a number of active possibilities. However, White's threats on the kingside outweigh this circumstance. Thus, on 18...♗f5 there would follow 19 ♕h5 g6 20 ♕h7, and if 20...♗g7, then 21 h5! ♗xe4 22 h6 (this motif is repeated in several variations).

Therefore Bagirov decides to simplify.

**18 ... ♗xg5**

**19 ♗xg5 f6** *(D)*




**20 ♕h5**

If White wishes to fight for an advantage, he must continue to play aggressively. On 20 ♗f4, 20...♗f5, forcing favourable simplification, now appears satisfactory.

**20 ... ♖xe4**

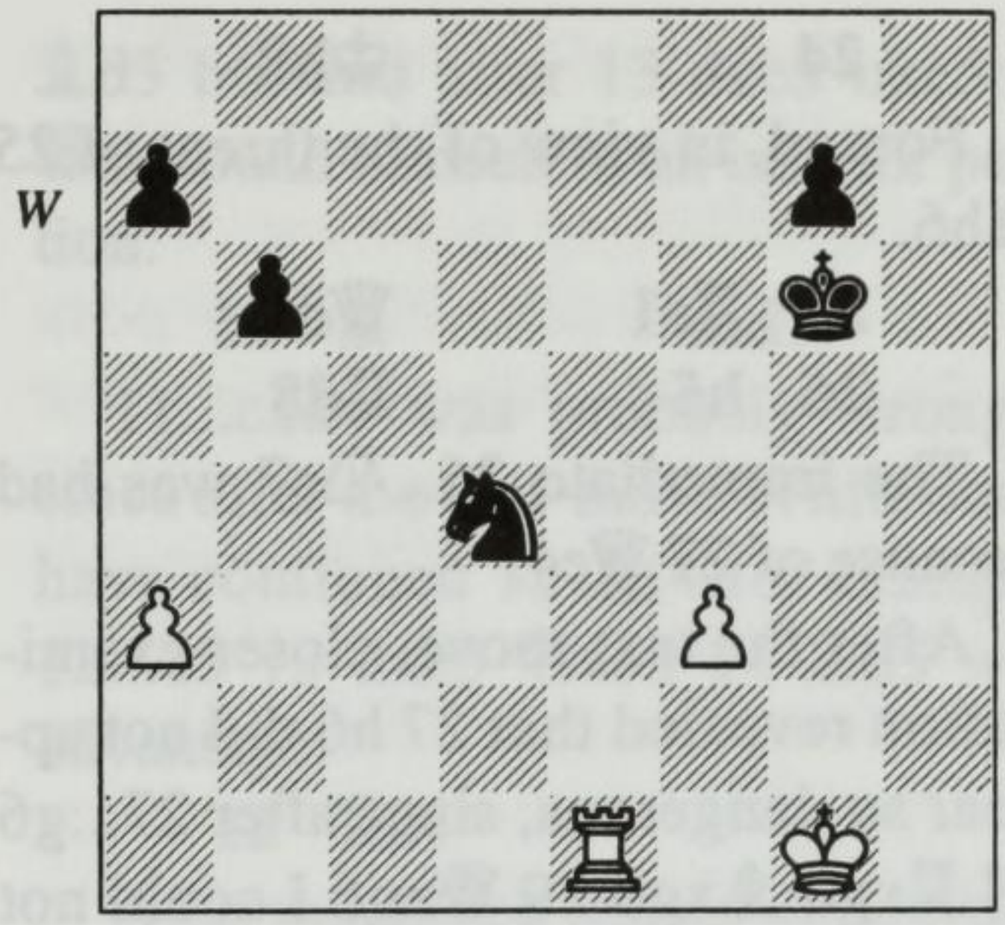
This capture is essential. After 20...fxg5 White could reply 21 hxg5 with many threats.

**21 ♖xe4 ♔g8**

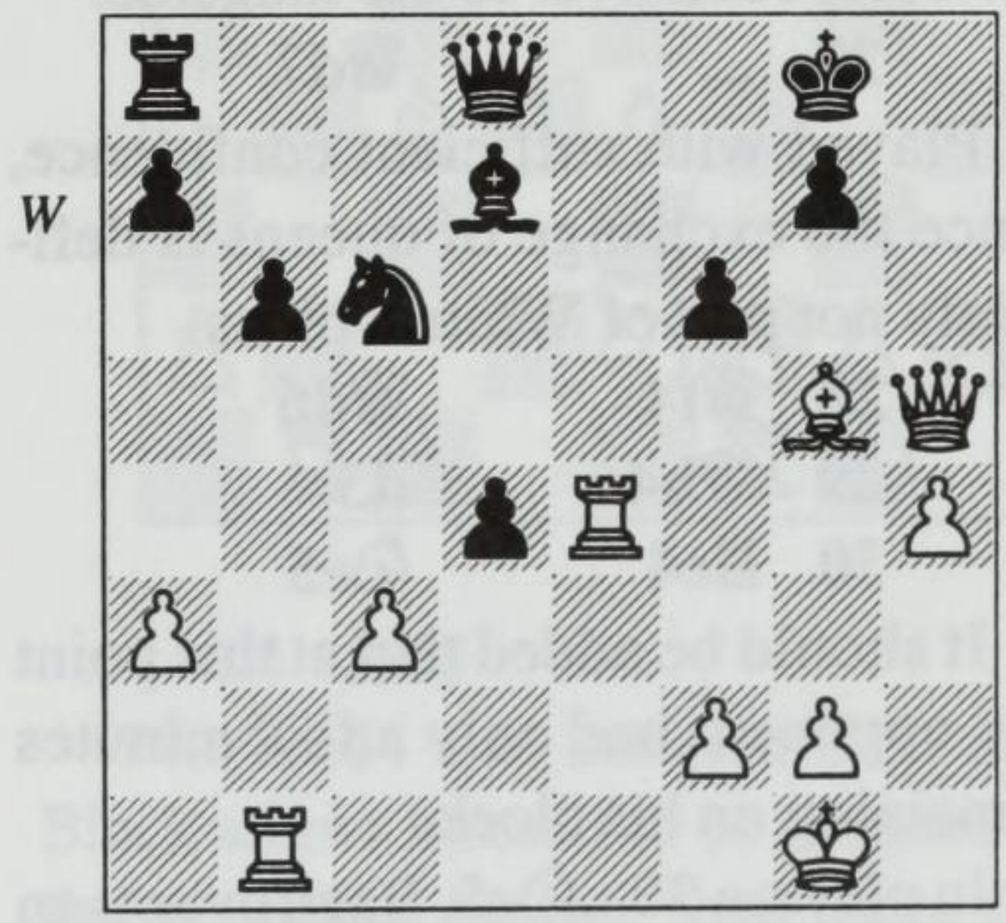
What a pity! After this feeble king move Black is simply the exchange down without any compensation. The remaining part of the game is reduced to the purely technical realisation of the material advantage (true, White tries to ensure that things are not limited to technique alone).

The capture of the white bishop was fraught with great dangers. After 21...fxg5 22 hxg5 White's queen and rook take part in the attack, his second rook is ready to be included, and the pawn on g5 plays a far from minor role.

Black should have accepted the challenge and played 21...♗f5!, which creates a highly interesting position, in which all White's pieces except his queen are either directly or indirectly attacked. White was anticipating this move, and had planned to continue 22 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 23 ♕h8+ (if 23 ♖f4 ♘e7, and nothing is gained by 24 g4 ♗xb1! 25 ♖xf6+ gxf6 26 ♕h8+ ♘g8, and Black has more than sufficient against the queen) 23...♔f7 24 ♕xa8 ♗xe4 25 ♖e1. Now the bishop is attacked, and it cannot move because of 26 ♕e8 mate. Black has only one defence: 25...♕xh4 (on 25...♕g6, 26 f3 d3 27 ♖xe4 ♕xe4 28 fxe4 d2 29 ♕b7+ decides) 26 cxd4. Now neither Black's knight nor his bishop can move, and White threatens quietly to move his rook to e3, threatening a decisive attack on the bishop. Thus: 26...♕g4! 27 f3 ♗xf3 28 ♕e8+ ♔f6 29 ♕f8+ ♔g6 30 ♕xf3 ♕xf3 (30...♕xd4+ is also possible) 31 gxf3 ♘xd4 *(D)*.




I examined this ending when considering my 20th move, and came to the conclusion that after 32 ♖e7 White has certain winning chances. However, I did not analyse it in any more detail either during the game or afterwards, but in any case this was Black's only chance. It would have led to a position in which White had roughly as much chance of winning as Black had of drawing. After the move actually played, 21...♔g8, the outcome of the game is practically settled.




**22 ♗d2 ♗e8**
**23 ♕f5 ♗f7**
**24 ♖g4**

Of course, simpler is 24 cxd4 when White is the exchange ahead, but I could not resist the temptation to play for a mate, this time with a material advantage.

**24 ... ♔h8**

Forced, in view of the threat of 25 ♗h6.

**25 ♖e1 ♕d6**

**26 h5 ♖d8**

The immediate 26...♘e7 was bad because of 27 ♕e4.

After the text-move, closer examination revealed that 27 h6 did not appear so dangerous, since after 27...g6 28 ♖xg6 ♗xg6 29 ♕xg6 I could not see a forced win. However, in this case also White's advantage is sufficient to win.

I wanted to play for the attack but completely without risk.

**27 ♖g3**

Preparing in some cases to transfer the other rook over to the kingside.

**27 ... ♕d7**

Played with sufficient confidence, since the exchange of queens is definitely not part of White's plans.

**28 ♕f4 ♕d6**

**29 ♕h4 d3**

**30 ♖e4 ♘e5**

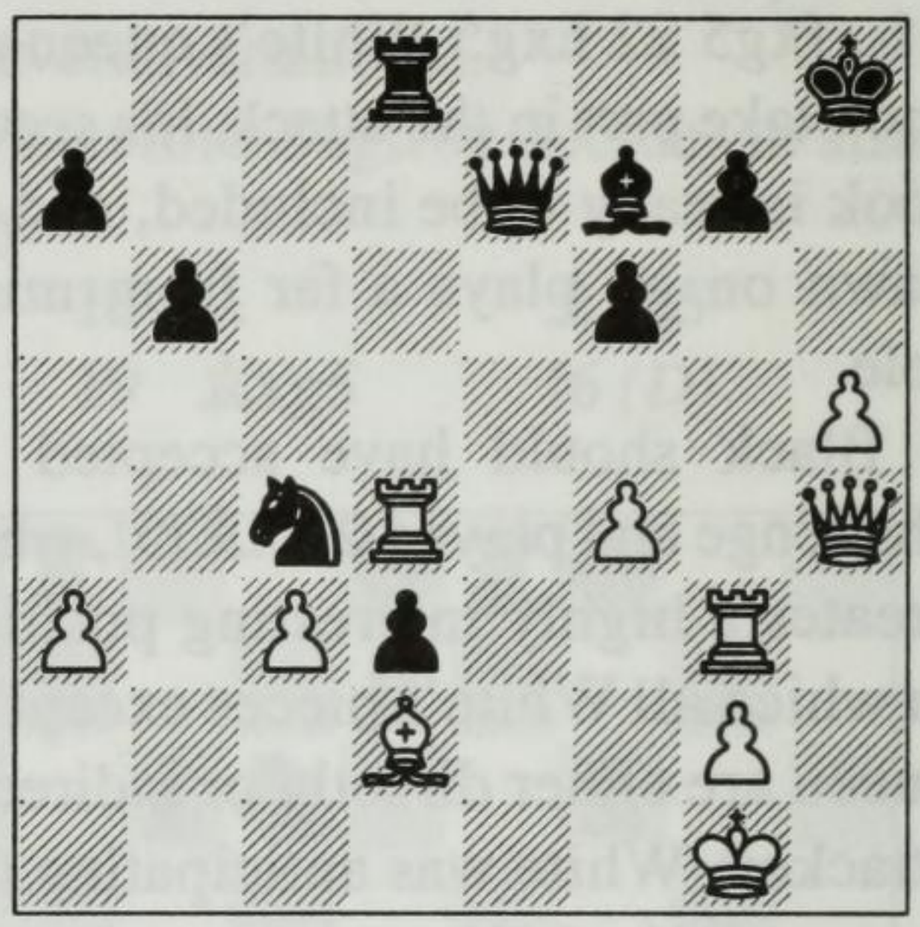
It should be added that at this point my opponent had only a few minutes remaining on his clock.

In playing 30...♘e5, Bagirov sets an interesting trap: 31 h6 g5 after which the piece sacrifice does not work: 32 ♗xg5 fxg5 33 ♕xg5 ♖g8! 34 ♕xe5+ ♕xe5 35 ♖xe5 ♖xg3 36 fxg3 d2 and the pawn unexpectedly queens.

Now at last White decides to deal seriously with this presumptuous foot soldier.

**31 f4 ♘c4**

**32 ♖d4 ♕e7** *(D)*




**33 ♕g4**

By threatening mate, White gains a tempo.

**33 ... ♖g8**

**34 ♖gxd3 ♕xa3**

**35 ♗e1**

Other continuations are of course possible, but taking into account my opponent's severe time-trouble, the move in the game, preserving the bishop which may yet be included in the attack, is the most unpleasant for Black.

**35 ... ♕c1**

**36 ♕e2 f5**

**37 h6**

White persistently plays to open up the kingside. Now on 37...gxh6 I was intending 38 ♖xc4 ♗xc4 39 ♕e5+ etc.

**37 ... ♖e8**

**38 ♖d8 ♖xd8**

**39 ♖xd8+ ♔h7**

**40 ♖d7 ♗g6**

**41 hxg7 1-0**

Since, after 41...♕e3+, White at last agrees to the exchange of queens, Black decides that further resistance is hopeless.

Game 84

**Gulko – Tal**

*Grandmasters v Young Masters Tournament, Sochi 1970*

Grünfeld Defence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **d4** | **♘f6** |
| **2** | **c4** | **g6** |
| **3** | **♘c3** | **d5** |

Normally I play this opening badly. My last attempt was in a game from the match with Larsen (1965), when I lost. Yet there is something in the defence that appeals to me, and it is most appropriate to train oneself in a training tournament.

**4 cxd5**

For some time the game develops in a fashion analogous to the Spassky-Fischer encounter at the 19th Olympiad in Siegen.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **4** | **...** | **♘xd5** |
| **5** | **e4** | **♘xc3** |
| **6** | **bxc3** | **♗g7** |
| **7** | **♗c4** | **0-0** |
| **8** | **♘e2** | **c5** |
| **9** | **0-0** | **♘c6** |
| **10** | **♗e3** | **♕c7** |
| **11** | **♕c1** | |

I was not familiar with this move. After the game I found out that Gulko had once played it in the Championship of Moscow against Suetin. Black had made a poor reply, 11...♘a5 12 ♗d3 b6, and after 13 dxc5 bxc5 14 ♕a3 found himself in an inferior position.

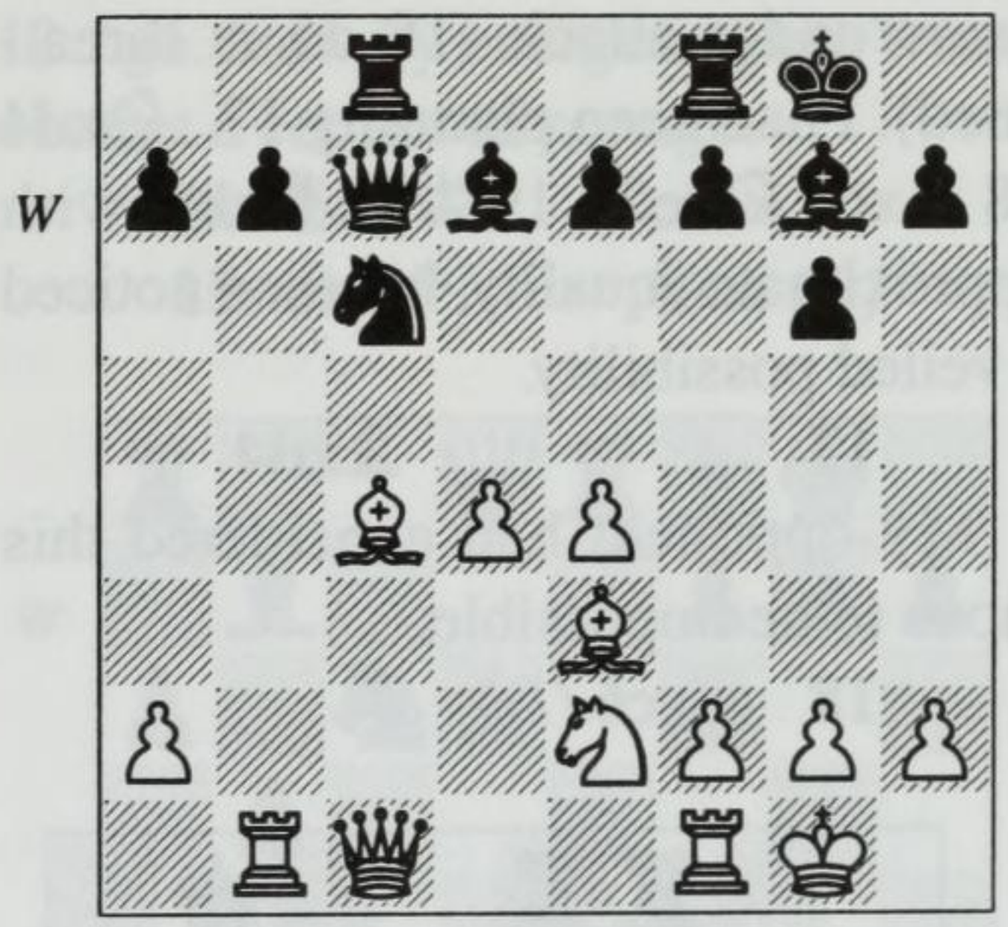
**11 ... ♗d7**

11...cxd4 was probably stronger, since after the text-move White could have continued 12 ♗f4 for example, 12...e5 13 dxe5 ♘xe5 14 ♗d5 with advantage.

**12 ♖b1**

After this Black has no difficulties.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | **...** | **cxd4** |
| **13** | **cxd4** | **♖ac8** *(D)* |




**14 ♗b5**

14...♘xd4 was threatened. If now Black allows himself to be tempted by the plausible 14...a6, then there follows 15 ♗d3, and if 15...♕d6, then 16 ♖b6!, with queenside pressure.

**14 ... ♕a5**

In the case of 15 ♗d2, besides the quiet reply 15...♕d8 Black also has the interesting continuation 15...♕xa2, for example: 16 ♗c4 ♘xd4 17 ♘c3 ♕xc4, or 16 ♖a1 ♕e6 (if Black does not wish to repeat moves) 17 d5 ♕xe4

18 dxc6 ♗xc6 19 f3 (19 ♗xc6? ♕xe2) 19...♗xb5 20 fxe4 ♖xc1.

**15 ♕b2**

This move is a part of White's plan. For the moment the diagonal pin is not dangerous.

**15 ... ♖fd8**

Here I expected a move like 16 ♕b3, but Gulko, a highly inventive player, noted that Black's queen was also exposed to attack.

**16 ♗d2 ♕b6**

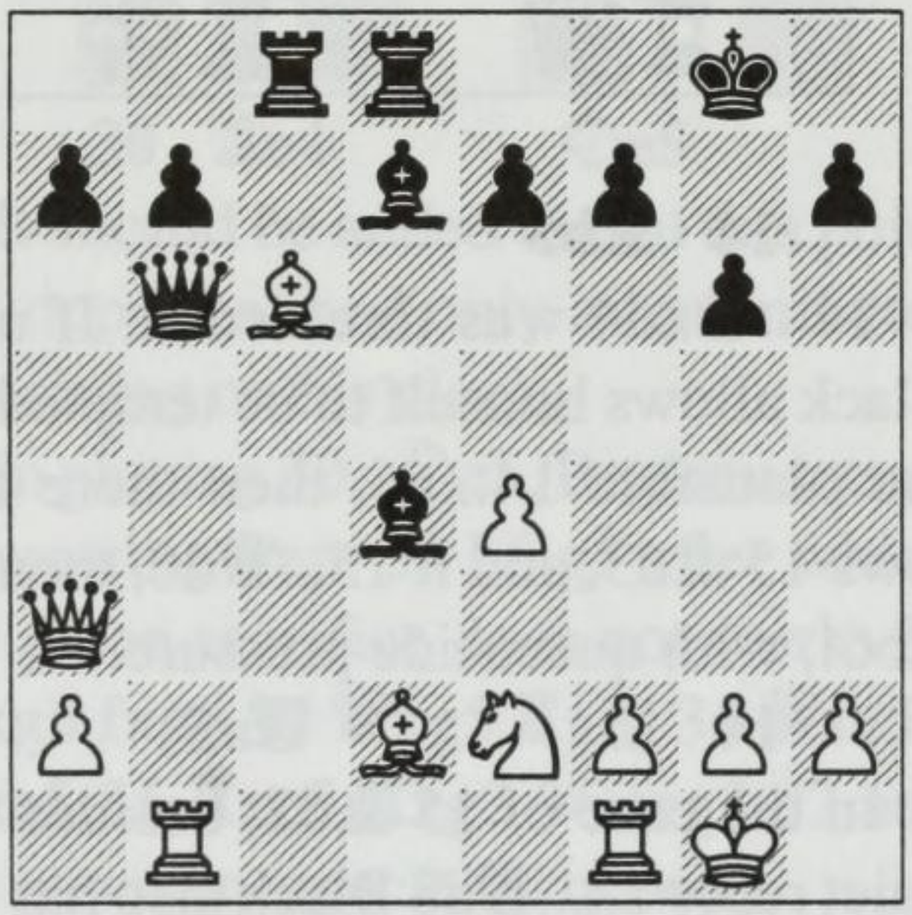
**17 ♕a3**

A number of black pawns have come under attack (18 d5 is threatened). I had been planning 17...♘xd4 18 ♗xd7 ♘xe2+ 19 ♔h1 ♕xb1, with approximate equality, but then noticed a veiled possibility.

**17 ... ♗xd4**

My opponent had considered this move to be impossible.

**18 ♗xc6** *(D)*



*B*

**18 ... ♗c5**

A surprise! If Black continues with 18...♗xf2+ 19 ♔h1 ♕xc6 20 ♖xf2 ♕xe4 21 ♖e1, the piece is stronger than the pawns.

**19 ♖xb6 ♗xa3**

**20 ♗xd7 ♖xd7**

Gulko is a player who needs a concrete plan. He is unsure when it comes to assessing a position. Here he sees a tactical possibility of keeping his material advantage, and considers it to be to his advantage. A more experienced player would probably have played 21 ♖b3. Following the exchanges Black would have only a slight advantage.

**21 ♗b4 axb6**

**22 ♗xa3 ♖c4**

This move is more dangerous for White than 22...♖a8, for example 23 ♗c1 ♖xa2 24 ♘c3 and 25 ♘d5. The text-move intends to drive the white knight to g3.

**23 ♘g3**

White should have ventured a pawn sacrifice: 23 ♗c1 ♖xe4 24 ♗e3.

**23 ... ♖a4**

**24 ♗c1 ♖xa2**

**25 ♗e3 ♖b2**

**26 ♖c1 b5**

This pawn is very strong.

**27 ♔f1 b4**

**28 ♔e1**

Or 28 ♘e2 b3 29 ♗d4 ♖c2 30 ♖b1 b2.

**28 ... b3**

**29 ♖c3 h5?**

Carelessly played. Stronger was 29...e5 and then ...f6, ...♔f7 etc. Now Gulko finds a shrewd possibility.

**30 e5 ♖d5**

**31 ♘e4!**

It turns out that after 31...♖xe5 32 ♘d2 the b3-pawn is lost: 32...♖b5 33 ♖c8+. Once again I had to get down to serious work.

**31 ... ♖b5**

Also quite good was 31...♖a5 32 ♗c1 ♖a1. However, after the move in the game and the possible 32 ♖c8+ ♔g7 33 ♗d4, Black has a choice between 33...♖b1+ 34 ♔d2 ♖d5, and 33...♖c2 34 e6+ f6 35 ♖e8 b2 36 ♖xe7+ ♔h6 37 ♗xb2 ♖5xb2 38 ♔d1 f5 39 ♖f7 fxe4 40 e7 e3! 41 fxe3 ♖xg2 42 ♔f1 ♖be2.

**32 e6 ♖b1+**
**33 ♔d2 b2**
**34 ♗d4? ♖d1+**
**0-1**

I should remark that after the stronger 34 ♖c8+ ♔g7 35 ♗d4+ f6 36 ♘c3 ♖c1 37 ♘xb5 b1♕ 38 ♖xc1 ♕xb5 Black has a won ending all the same.

Game 85

**Tseshkovsky – Tal**

*Grandmasters v Young Masters Tournament, Sochi 1970*

Ruy Lopez

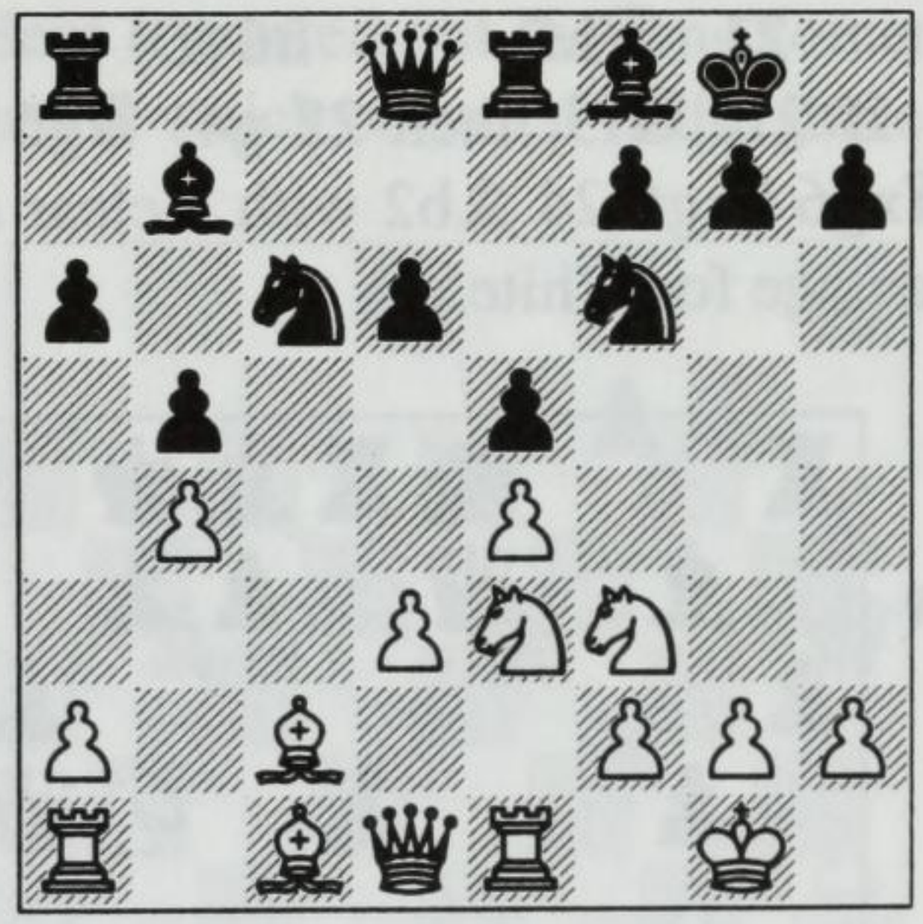
**1 e4 e5**
**2 ♘f3 ♘c6**
**3 ♗b5 a6**
**4 ♗a4 ♘f6**
**5 0-0 ♗e7**
**6 ♖e1 b5**
**7 ♗b3 0-0**
**8 d3**

It would appear that White simply wishes to avoid the Marshall Attack. In fact, despite its unassuming appearance, the system he has chosen contains a fair amount of poison, and if Black plays carelessly he risks getting into difficulties.

**8 ... d6**
**9 c3 ♘a5**
**10 ♗c2 c5**
**11 ♘bd2 ♖e8**
**12 ♘f1 ♗f8**
**13 ♘e3 ♗b7**

More cautious was 13...♘c6 or 13...g6. Now by energetic play White obtains a certain advantage.

**14 b4 cxb4**
**15 cxb4 ♘c6** *(D)*




**16 a3**

Nothing concrete is gained by 16 ♗b3 ♘xb4 17 ♘g5 ♖e7 18 ♘f5 ♖d7, but now 17 ♗b3, seizing the d5-square, is threatened, and therefore Black decides to advance his central pawn, even though this increases White's attacking potential. It should

be noted that 16...a5 would be bad because of 17 bxa5, when Black's b-pawn is highly vulnerable.

**16 ... d5**
**17 ♘xd5**

17 exd5 ♘d4 is weaker.

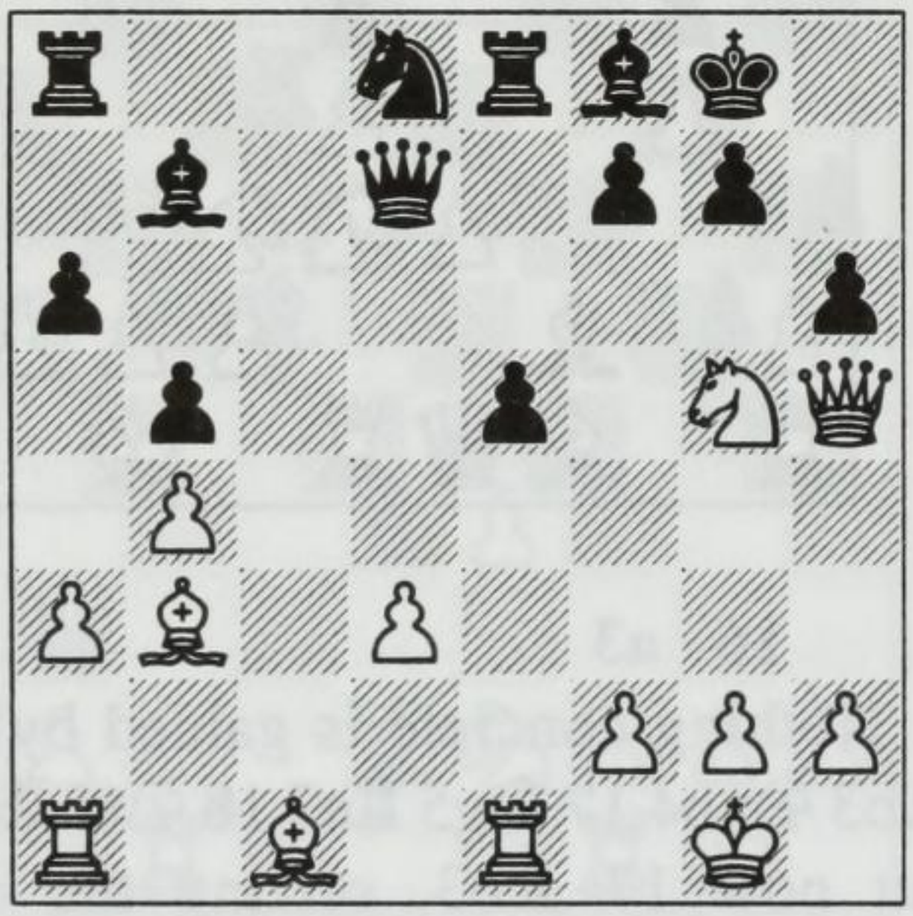
**17 ... ♘xd5**
**18 exd5 ♕xd5**
**19 ♗b3 ♕d7**
**20 ♘g5! ♘d8**

The alternative defence 20...♖e7 was less suitable, since in certain variations the white knight could move via e4 to c5 with gain of tempo.

Now Black only has to play ...♗d5 in order to be able to look confidently to the future, but White uses the fact that it is his move to develop his initiative.

**21 ♕h5 h6** *(D)*

If 21...♕f5, then 22 g4! ♕g6 23 ♕xg6 hxg6 24 ♗b2 with a clear advantage for White.



*W*

**22 ♖e3**

This loses White his advantage. I was afraid of the continuation 22 ♘e4 with the terrible threat of ♗xh6 (22...♗d5 23 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 24 ♗xh6). Since capturing the knight leaves White with an enormous advantage, I was planning to sacrifice my queen by 22...♕xd3 23 ♖e3 and now not 23...♕d4 because of 24 ♘f6+! ♔h8 (24...gxf6 25 ♖g3+ ♔h7 26 ♕f5+) 25 ♖g3 ♗c5 (25...♕xa1 26 ♕xh6+!) 26 ♗xh6 g6 27 ♗f8+! but 23...♗xe4 24 ♖xd3 ♗xd3 although in this case too White has the better chances after 25 ♗e3.

**22 ... ♗d5!**

The tempting 22...♕f5 is refuted by 23 ♖h3 (with the threat of 24 ♘xf7) 23...♗c8 24 ♖f3 g6 25 ♖xf5 gxh5 26 ♖xf7 hxg5 27 ♖e7+ ♗e6 28 ♖xe8 ♗xb3 29 ♗xg5. After the text, White's king's bishop is exchanged off, and the attacking power of the white pieces falls sharply.

**23 ♗xd5 ♕xd5**
**24 ♘e4**

On 24 ♘f3 possible is 24...g6 25 ♖xe5 ♕c6!, followed by the intrusion on c3.

**24 ... ♖e6**
**25 ♖g3 ♔h8**

In my preliminary calculations I had been afraid here of the variation 26 ♗xh6 ♖xh6 27 ♕xh6+ gxh6 28 ♘f6, but then I noticed that I could simply play 26...gxh6.

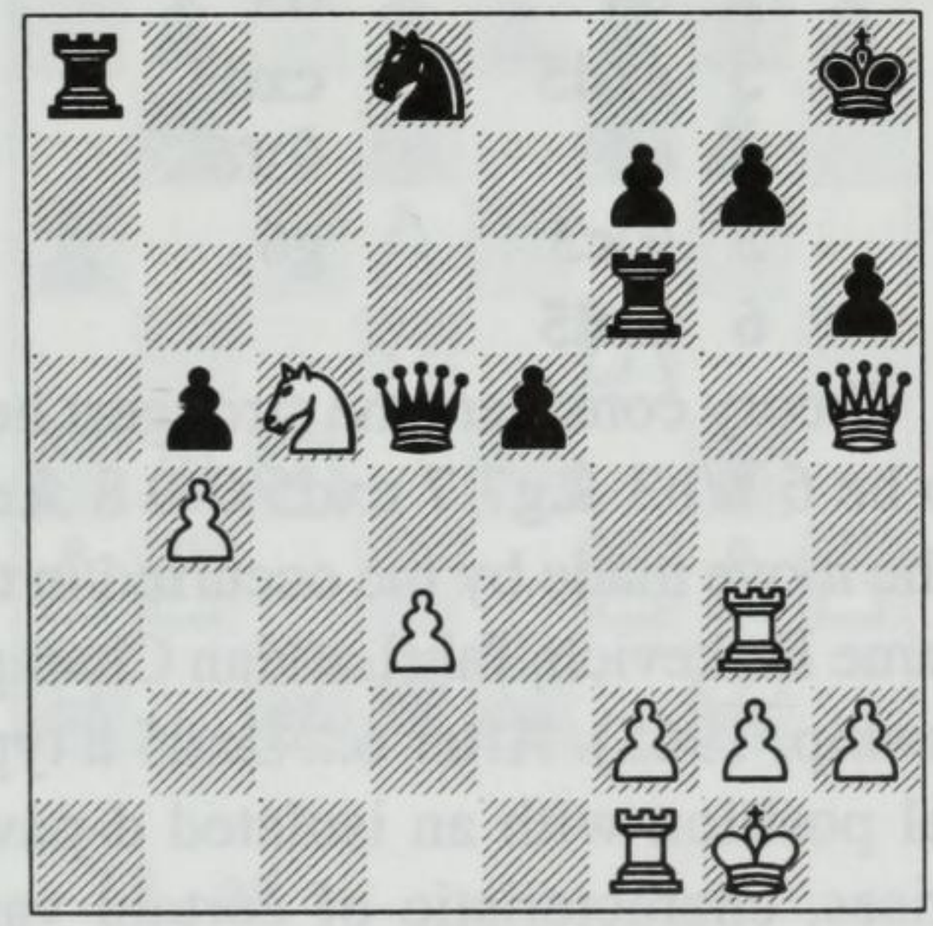
Thus the position, in my opinion, has become level, and now White should have quietly played 26 ♗d2. However, Tseshkovsky, still under the impression that he is attacking,

continues playing actively by inertia, thereby allowing Black to seize the initiative.

**26 ♗e3 a5**
**27 ♗c5 ♗xc5**
**28 ♘xc5 ♖f6**
**29 ♖f1**

In this way White parries the threat of 29...axb4. On 29 ♖e1 there could have followed 29...axb4 30 axb4 ♕d4 31 ♘e4 ♖a1. Now White has defended the f2-square, but this defence turns out to be illusory, and therefore 29 ♘e4 ♖fa6 30 ♕g4 ♖g6 31 ♕d1 was better, though even then Black keeps a certain advantage.

**29 ... axb4**
**30 axb4** *(D)*



**30 ... ♖xf2!**

Alas, White can play neither 31 ♖xf2 ♖a1+ 32 ♖f1 ♕d4+, nor 31 ♔xf2 ♕d4+ 32 ♔f3 ♕f4+ 33 ♔e2 ♖a2+.

**31 ♖e1 ♖f4**

Although Black's position appears very menacing, there are no concrete paths to victory. If 31...♕d4, then 32 ♕xe5, while on 31...♖8a2 there follows 32 ♘e4.

**32 h3 ♖a1**

With this move Black defends his e-pawn, and weakens his opponent's back rank, thus paving the way for an attack.

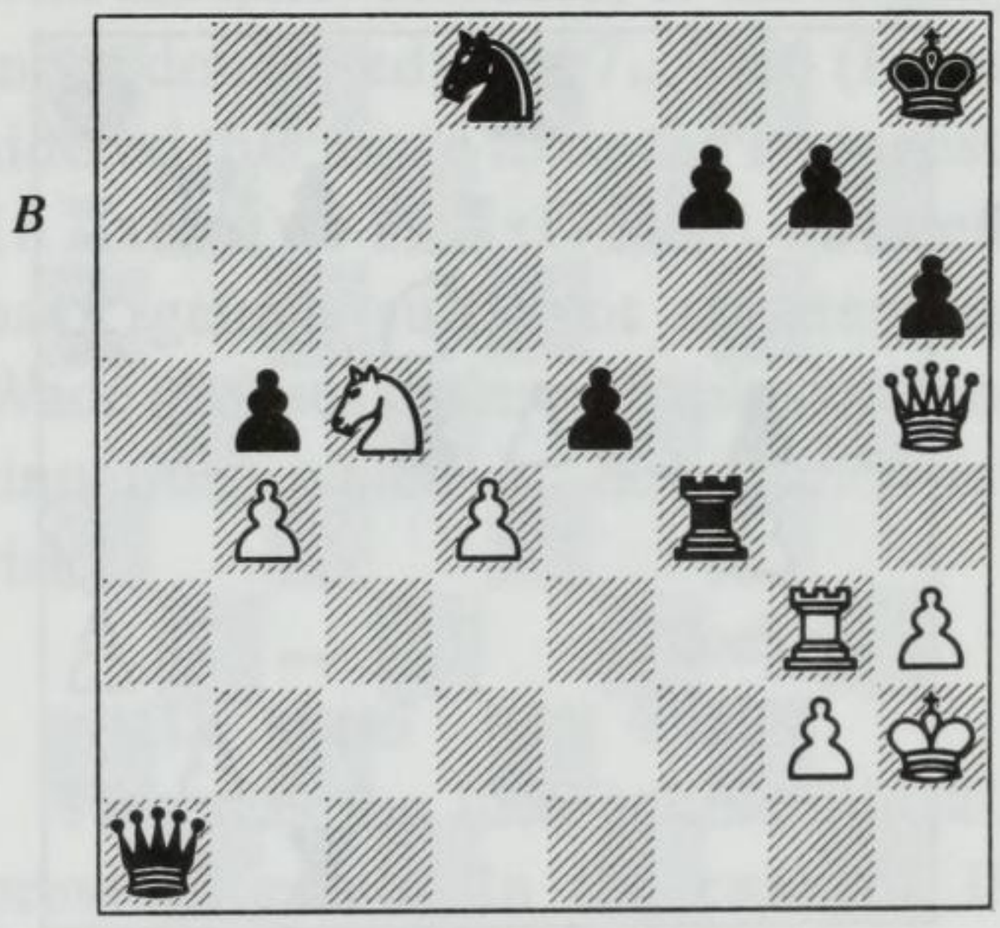
**33 ♖xa1 ♕d4+**
**34 ♔h2 ♕xa1**

As a result Black has an extra pawn and quite good attacking prospects. Tseshkovsky finds a clever counter-chance.

**35 d4!** *(D)*

The pawn is attacked by three pieces, and yet it cannot be captured: 35...♕xd4 36 ♖d3; 35...♖xd4 36 ♘b3; 35...exd4 36 ♕e5 ♖f6 37 ♕e8+ ♔h7 38 ♘d7.

Here I worked out the long forced variation which occurred in the game.



**35 ... ♘c6**
**36 ♘e6**

36 d5 was tempting, so that if 36...♘d4, then 37 d6 ♖f1 38 ♖e3 ♘f5 39 ♕xf5 ♖xf5 40 d7 ♕d4 41 ♖d3 and

Black must settle for perpetual check (41...♕f4+ 42 ♔h1 ♕f1+ etc.). However, I was planning to play differently: 36...♖f1 37 ♖e3 ♕d4, winning the d-pawn.

**36 ... ♖f1**

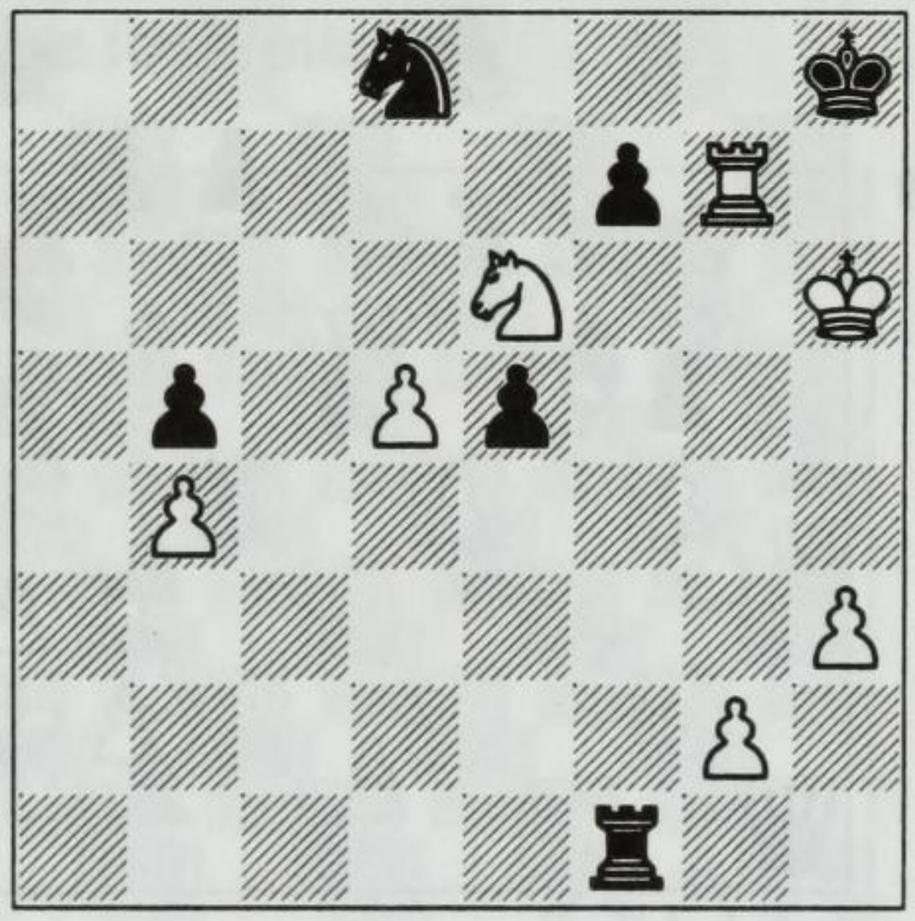
Not, of course, 36...fxe6 37 ♕e8+ ♔h7 38 ♕g6+.

**37 ♖xg7 ♖h1+**
**38 ♔g3 ♕e1+**
**39 ♔g4 ♕e2+**
**40 ♔h4 ♕xh5+**
**41 ♔xh5**

A curious position has arisen. After 41...fxe6, 42 ♖c7! assures White of a draw, since 42...♘xd4 loses to 43 ♔g6, but I went in for this position with the following line in mind:

**41 ... ♖f1**
**42 d5 ♘d8**
**43 ♔xh6** *(D)*

*B*



**43 ... ♘xe6!**

Less clear is 43...fxe6 44 ♖d7 or 43...♖f6+ 44 ♔g5 ♖xe6 45 dxe6 ♘xe6+ 46 ♔f6 ♘xg7 47 ♔xe5.

**44 ♖h7+ ♔g8**
**45 dxe6 ♖f6+**
**46 ♔g5 ♖g6+**
**47 ♔f5 ♔xh7**
**48 exf7**

Here Tseshkovsky was no doubt hoping for 48...♖xg2 49 f8♘+, but there is a very simple solution.

**48 ... ♔g7!**
**0-1**

After 49 f8♕+ ♔xf8 50 ♔xg6 e4 the black pawn queens.

Game 86

**Tal – Wade**

*Tallinn 1971*

Caro-Kann Defence

**1 e4 c6**
**2 d4 d5**
**3 exd5 cxd5**
**4 c4 ♘f6**
**5 ♘c3 g6**
**6 cxd5**

Theory considers the strongest here to be 6 ♕b3 ♗g7 7 cxd5 0-0 8 ♗e2. The move made by me occurred in the game Petkevich-Tal (Latvian Championship, 1965). After 6...♘xd5 a typical position with an isolated d-pawn arises, characteristic of certain variations of the Grünfeld Defence. Black played ...

**6 ... ♗g7**

... on which I decided to attempt to defend my extra pawn on d5 without moving my queen to an inactive post. However, this should not have brought White any great benefits.

**7 ♗c4 0-0**

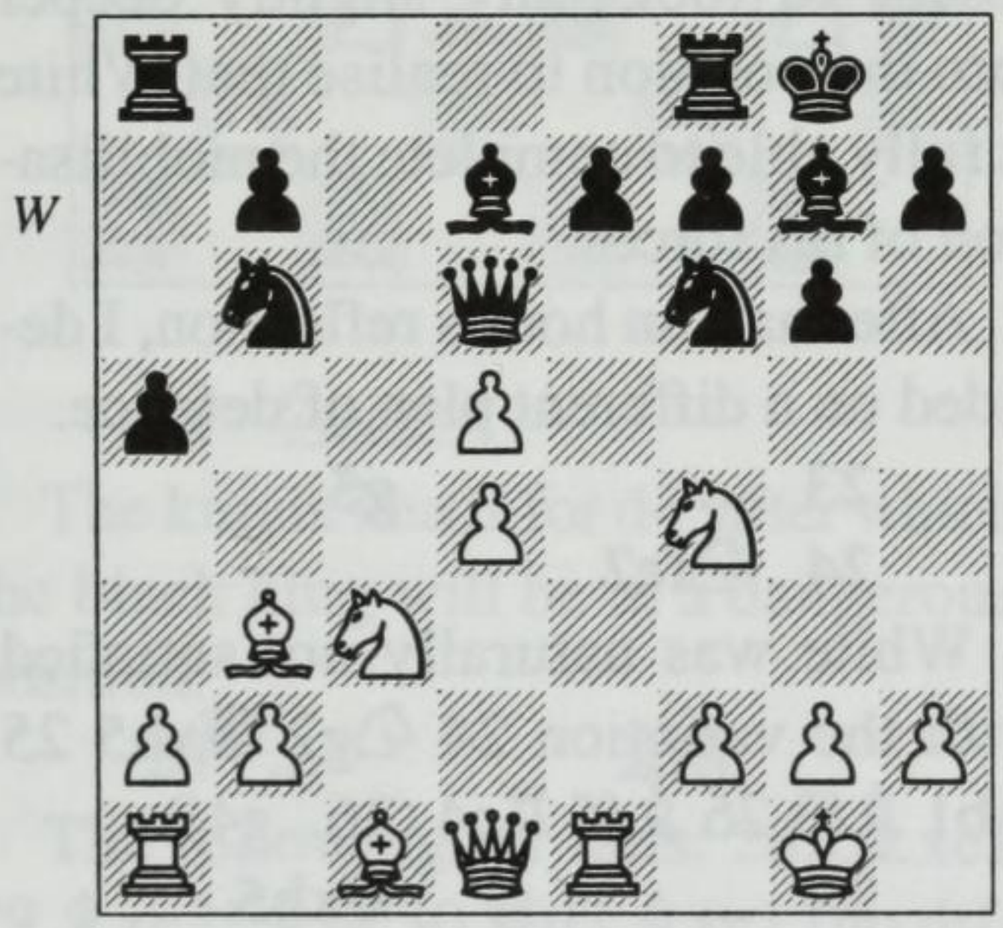
**8 ♘ge2 ♘bd7**
**9 ♘f4 ♘b6**
**10 ♗b3**

The pawn on d5 is soundly enough defended, although it is true that White's pieces are not especially harmoniously placed.

**10 ... ♕d6**
**11 0-0 ♗d7**
**12 ♖e1**

Black's e-pawn comes under attack. Besides, the white rook is ready, if necessary, to defend the d-pawn from the fifth rank, and is prepared to sacrifice itself in the process.

**12 ... a5** *(D)*




**13 a4**

13 a3 was without doubt more circumspect, since it does not concede Black the b4-square. I did not want to allow the black rook onto a5 (after 13...a4 14 ♗a2), since subsequently the impulsive Wade could be expected to sacrifice the exchange, which leads to a position where Black has the initiative.

After the text, the attempt to exploit the weakening of the queenside directly by ...♕b4 (now or in the near future) loses immediately to ♘d3!, when the pawn on d4 is invulnerable because of ♗e3 winning the knight. Black, however, has no need to hurry.

**13 ... ♖fc8**
**14 h3 h6**

Intending to win back his pawn by 15...g5.

**15 ♖e5 ♘c4**
**16 ♕e2**

I have already stated that the white rook does not intend to abandon its attacking post.

**16 ... ♕b4**

Now this is perfectly playable.

**17 ♗a2**

Black has obtained quite good compensation for the pawn. By continuing with the quiet 17...♗f8, or the slightly more double-edged 17...♘d6 (I considered this move to be the strongest) 18 ♖xe7 ♘f5 19 ♖xf7 ♖e8!, he could have gained sufficient counterplay. Wade chooses the most explosive continuation, which is, however, overrisky.

**17 ... ♘xe5**
**18 dxe5 ♘h5!?**

This was the idea behind Black's previous move. In the case of 19 ♘xh5 gxh5 20 ♕xh5 there follows the counter-sacrifice of the exchange 20...♖xc3! 21 bxc3 ♕xc3, and Black seizes the initiative. On the other hand, as the next move emphasises, the knight is badly placed on h5.

**19 ♘d3 ♕h4**
**20 g4?!**

Falling in with Black's wishes. Considerably more accurate was 20 ♕f3 (threatening to win the knight without making any concessions) 20...f5 21 ♗d2 and despite being the exchange ahead, Black's position is pretty cheerless. Now complications arise, which each player considered to be in his own favour.

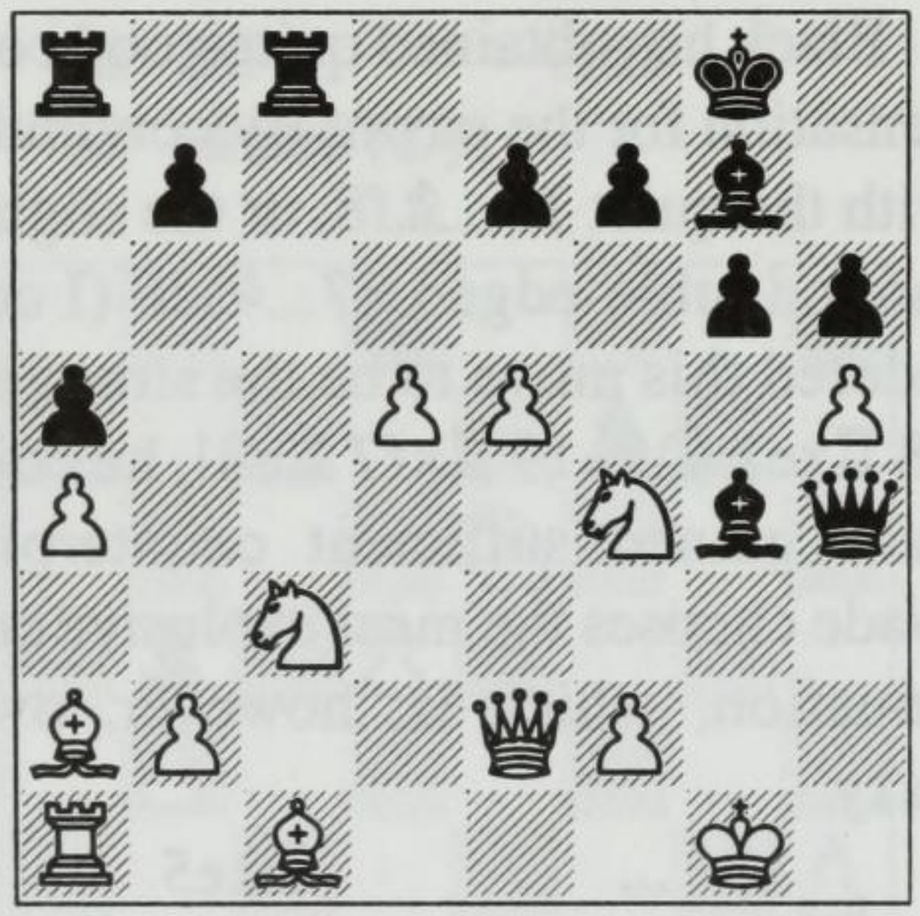
**20 ... ♕xh3**

In reply to 20...♘g3, White would now have played 21 ♕f3.

**21 gxh5 ♗g4**
**22 ♘f4!**

An essential intermediate move.

**22 ... ♕h4** *(D)*



**23 ♕e3**

In my preliminary calculations I had planned to continue here 23 ♕e4. In this case the variation chosen in the game by Wade would have lost considerably in strength, as after 23...g5 24 ♘fe2 ♕xh5 25 ♘g3 ♕h3 26 ♗b1 White would win an important tempo. Therefore I considered Black's strongest to be 23...♗f5 on which I was planning a combination: 24 ♘xg6! ♕xe4 25 ♘xe7+ ♔f8 26 ♘xe4 ♔xe7 27 ♘d6. In considering my 23rd move, I unexpectedly came across another possibility for my opponent: 25...♔h8 (instead of 25...♔f8) 26 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 27 ♘xc8 ♗xe5 (clearly, the position after 27...♖xc8 28 ♗f4 must be won for White). Since 28 ♘e7 ♗d6 leads to Black winning back his piece, while after 28 ♘b6 ♖g8+ it appeared to me that the attack by the hostile rook and bishops was very dangerous, I wrongly rejected this continuation. It was necessary to look only slightly deeper into the position to realise that White is fully able to complete the mobilisation of his forces.

After half an hour's reflection, I decided on a different plan of defence.

**23 ... g5**
**24 ♘fe2**

White was naturally not satisfied with the variation 24 ♘g2 ♕xh5 25 ♗b1 ♗f3 26 ♗f5 ♖c4 (26...g4!).

**24 ... ♕xh5**
**25 ♘g3 ♕h3**

Now the threat of 26...♗xe5 cannot be met. However, White does not even intend to try. First of all he brings his light-squared bishop out of voluntary imprisonment.

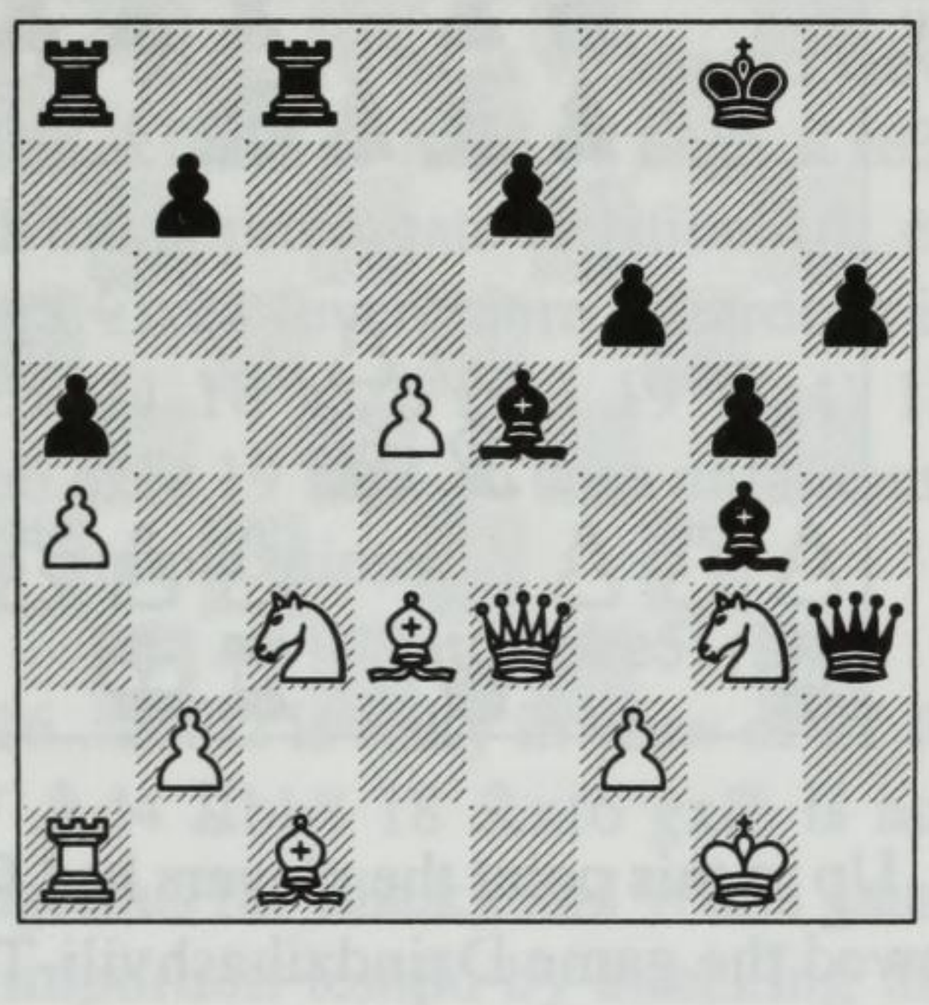
**26 ♗b1 ♗xe5**
**27 ♗d3**

Here White could have transposed into an ending by 27 ♕xe5 ♗f3 28 ♗h7+ ♔xh7 29 ♕f5+ ♕xf5 30 ♘xf5.

However, the position arising did not appeal to me because of 30...♖c4. 27 ♕e4 would have only led to a draw after 27...f5! 28 ♕xe5 ♗f3 29 ♕e6+ ♔h8.

**27 ... f6** *(D)*

Alas, 27...♗f4 fails to 28 ♕e4 with the threat of mate in two moves.



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**28 ♘ce2!**

The knight heads for d4, after which the black king will be in a dangerous position.

**28 ... ♖f8**

The following try fails: 28...♗xe2 29 ♗xe2! ♗f4 30 ♕d3 ♗xc1 (no different is 30...♖xc1+) 31 ♕g6+ ♔h8 (or 31...♔f8 32 ♗h5) 32 ♗d3 with inevitable mate.

**29 ♘d4 ♗xd4**

There is nothing better.

**30 ♕xd4 ♗f3**
**31 ♗f1 ♕d7**
**32 ♕d3!**

Now it is White who is attacking.

**32 ... ♕xd5**
**33 ♕g6+ ♔h8**
**34 ♕xh6+ ♔g8**
**35 ♕g6+**

Both players were a little short of time.

**35 ... ♔h8**
**36 ♖a3**

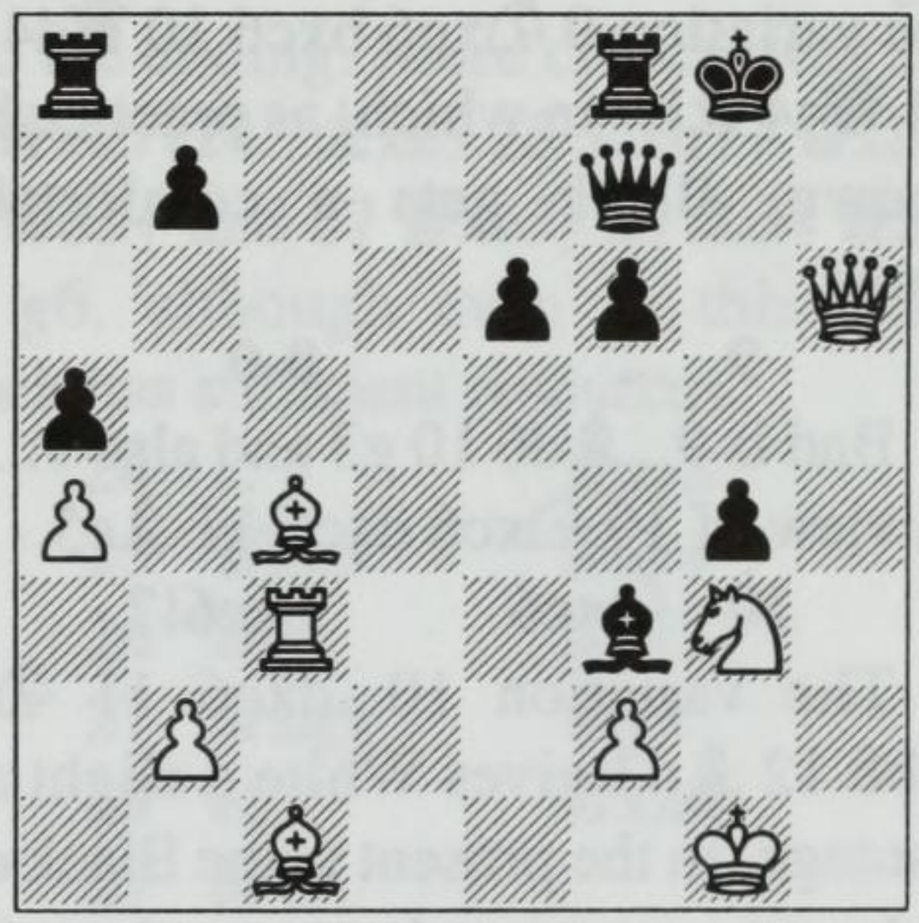
In reply to 36 ♘f5 Black had the defence 36...♕f7.

White includes his rook in the attack. In a number of variations the bishop on f3 will be *en prise*, and therefore Black's reaction is the natural one.

**36 ... g4**
**37 ♕h6+ ♔g8**
**38 ♖c3 ♕f7**

On 38...♖ac8, the reply 39 ♗d3! is decisive.

**39 ♗c4 e6** *(D)*



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**40 ♗xe6!**

A simple concluding combination. The white rook, which for a long time has been silent, is destined to have the last word, while in this game, as it turns out, the services of the dark-squared bishop are not required.

**40 ... ♕xe6**
**41 ♕g6+ 1-0**

On 41...♔h8, 42 ♖c7 is decisive.

Game 87
**Geller – Tal**
*USSR Championship, Leningrad 1971*
Sicilian Defence

**1 e4 c5**
**2 ♘f3 e6**
**3 d4 cxd4**
**4 ♘xd4 ♘c6**
**5 ♘c3 ♕c7**
**6 ♗e2 ♘f6**
**7 ♗e3 a6**
**8 0-0 ♗b4**
**9 ♘a4**

This continuation has superseded the variation 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 10 ♕d4 c5 11 ♕c4 ♗b7 in which, as practice has shown, Black gets a comfortable game.

**9 ... 0-0**

Bad is 9...♗d6 10 g3 and also 9...b5 in view of 10 ♘xc6 dxc6 11 ♗c5.

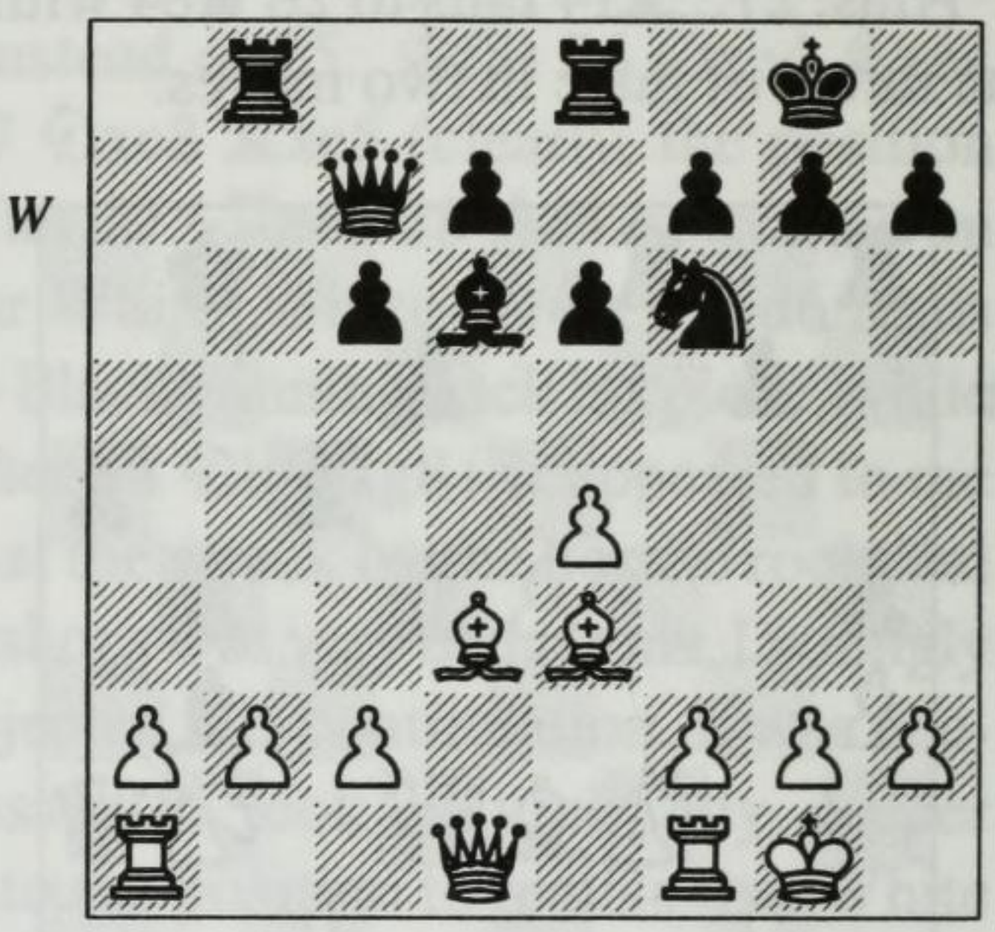
**10 ♘xc6 bxc6!?**

The variation 10...dxc6 11 ♘b6 ♖b8 12 ♗d3 gives White a slight advantage. In the present game Black decides to try out a sharp continuation which was prepared by Taimanov for his match with Fischer, but which only occurred a year and a half later in Taimanov's game with Dzindzihashvili in this 39th USSR Championship.

**11 ♘b6 ♖b8**
**12 ♘xc8 ♖fxc8**

Weaker is 12...♕xc8 (Mecking-Portisch, Palma 1970). After 13 e5 ♘d5 14 ♗d4 c5 15 c4 White gained the advantage.

**13 ♗xa6 ♖e8**
**14 ♗d3 ♗d6** *(D)*




Up to this point the players had followed the game Dzindzihashvili-Taimanov. Here the Georgian master continued 15 f4 and after 15...e5 16 f5 ♖xb2 17 g4 it appeared unlikely that White's attack could be repulsed. However, 17...h6 18 h4 ♗f8 19 g5 hxg5 20 hxg5 ♘d5! gave Black sufficient counterplay.

In answer to 15 g3, 15 h3 or 15 ♔h1 (only special analysis can show which of these three continuations is the strongest) 15...♖xb2 is not good in view of 16 ♗d4 and 17 ♗xf6, but Black can win back his pawn by 15...♗e5.

**15 g4**

After an hour's reflection Geller comes up with an interesting idea. Exploiting the fact that the black knight

has no retreat squares, White tries to gain a few tempi for the attack.

**15 ... h6**

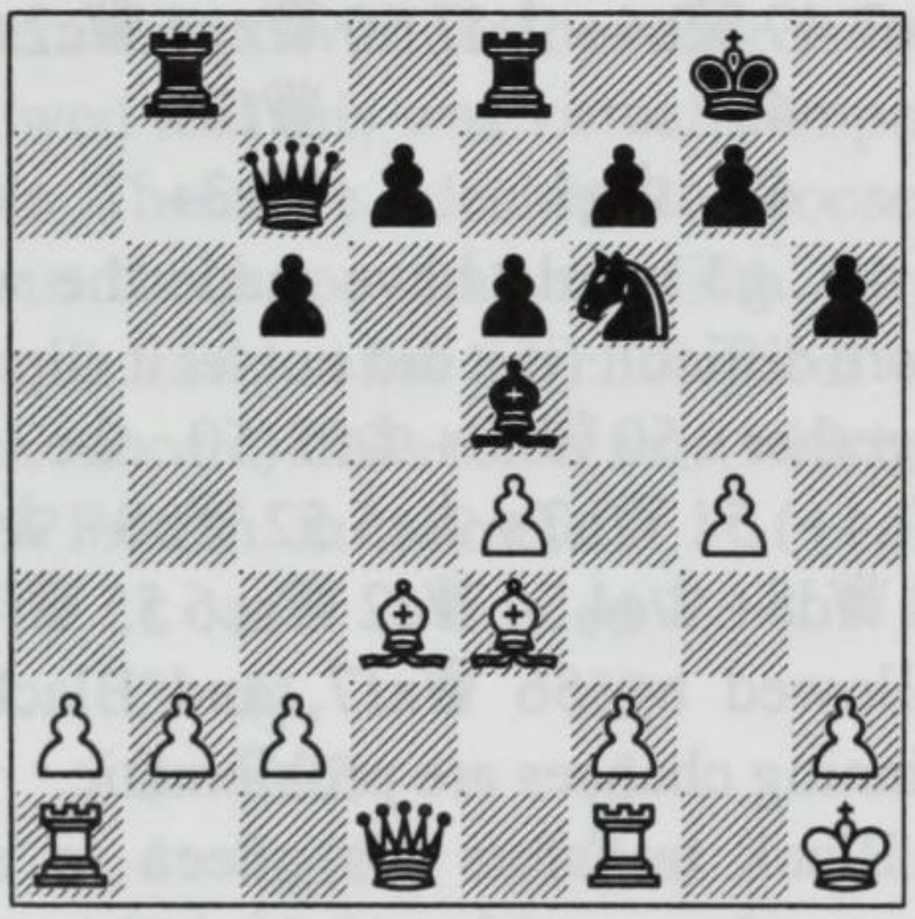
Forced, since 15...g6 16 f4 e5 is bad in view of 17 f5.

**16 ♔h1**

An unsuccessful move; time at this point is particularly precious. The requirements of the position were better met by 16 f4 (16 h4 is weaker in view of 16...♗f4 17 g5 hxg5 18 hxg5 ♗xe3) with this approximate variation: 16...e5 17 g5 ♘xe4 (even more hazardous is 17...exf4 18 gxf6 fxe3 19 ♕g4) 18 gxh6 exf4 19 ♕g4 g6 with unfathomable complications.

**16 ... ♗e5!** *(D)*

16...♖xb2 is risky in view of 17 f4 (17 ♗d4 ♖bb8 18 ♗xf6 gxf6 is not dangerous for Black), and White gains an important tempo by attacking the rook, for example: 17...e5 18 g5 ♘xe4 19 gxh6 exf4 20 ♗d4.



**17 ♖b1**

If 17 c3, then 17...♖xb2 18 ♕c1 ♕b8 while on 17 f4 ♗xb2 18 ♖b1 Black answers with a counter-blow in the centre: 18...d5 19 e5 ♘e4, with an excellent game.

**17 ... ♗xb2**

Capturing with the rook is decidedly inferior: 17...♖xb2 18 f4 ♖xb1 19 ♕xb1 ♘xg4 20 ♗b6 ♕b8 21 fxe5 ♕xe5 22 ♗g1.

**18 ♖g1 ♗e5**
**19 ♖xb8 ♖xb8**
**20 h4 ♗h2**

With the aim of weakening White's back rank. The alternative was 20...d5, but Black did not want to open the diagonal for the enemy bishop.

**21 ♖g2 ♗f4**
**22 g5 hxg5**
**23 hxg5 ♘h7**
**24 ♕c1**

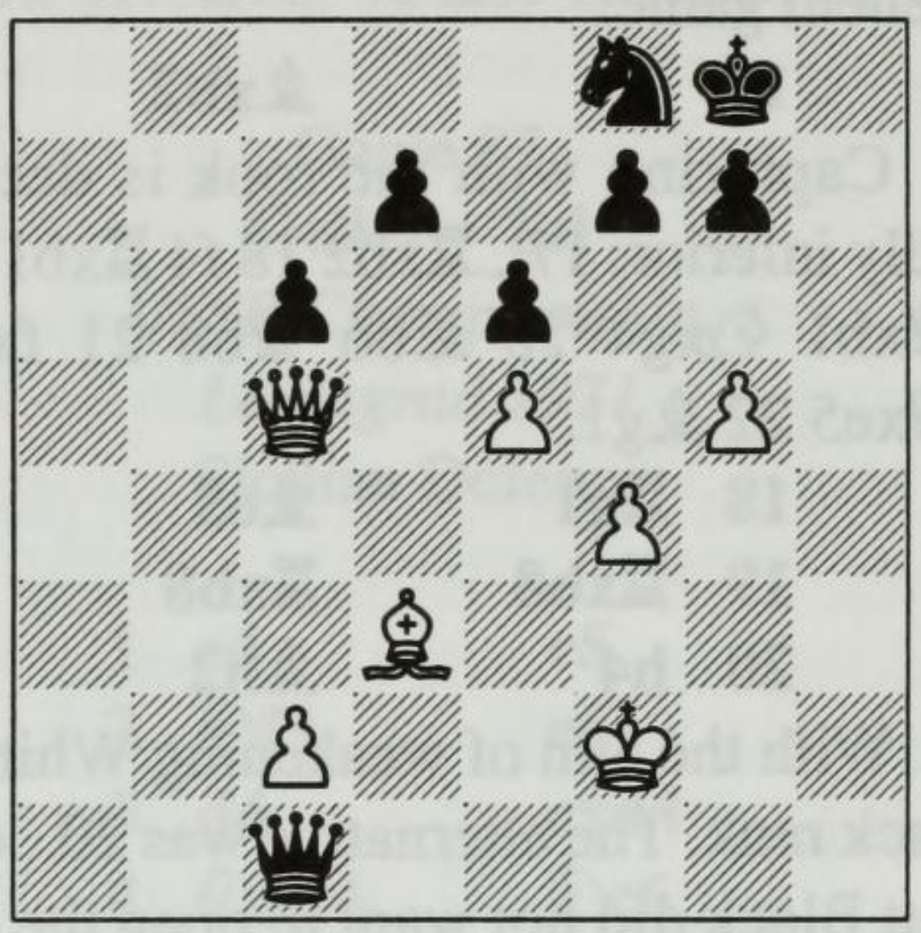
Short of time, Geller decides to go into the ending. More critical was 24 e5 ♕xe5 (24...♗xe3 25 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 26 ♕d3+ and 27 ♕xe3) 25 ♗d4 ♕a5 26 g6, although even in this case Black has sufficient resources.

**24 ... ♗xe3**
**25 ♕xe3 ♖b1+**
**26 ♖g1 ♖xg1+**
**27 ♔xg1 ♕a5**
**28 e5 ♕xa2**
**29 f4**

In the queen ending after 29 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 30 ♕d3+ ♔g8 31 ♕xd7 ♕a1+ Black would have every chance of winning. The move in the game is significantly stronger, since the enemy knight is prevented from coming into play.

**29 ... ♘f8**

**30 ♔f2 ♕a1**
**31 ♕c5 ♕c1** *(D)*




**32 ♕d4?**

Correct was 32 ♔f3 or 32 ♔g3 with a probable draw. Now, however, Black's knight escapes from imprisonment, and comes into play with decisive effect.

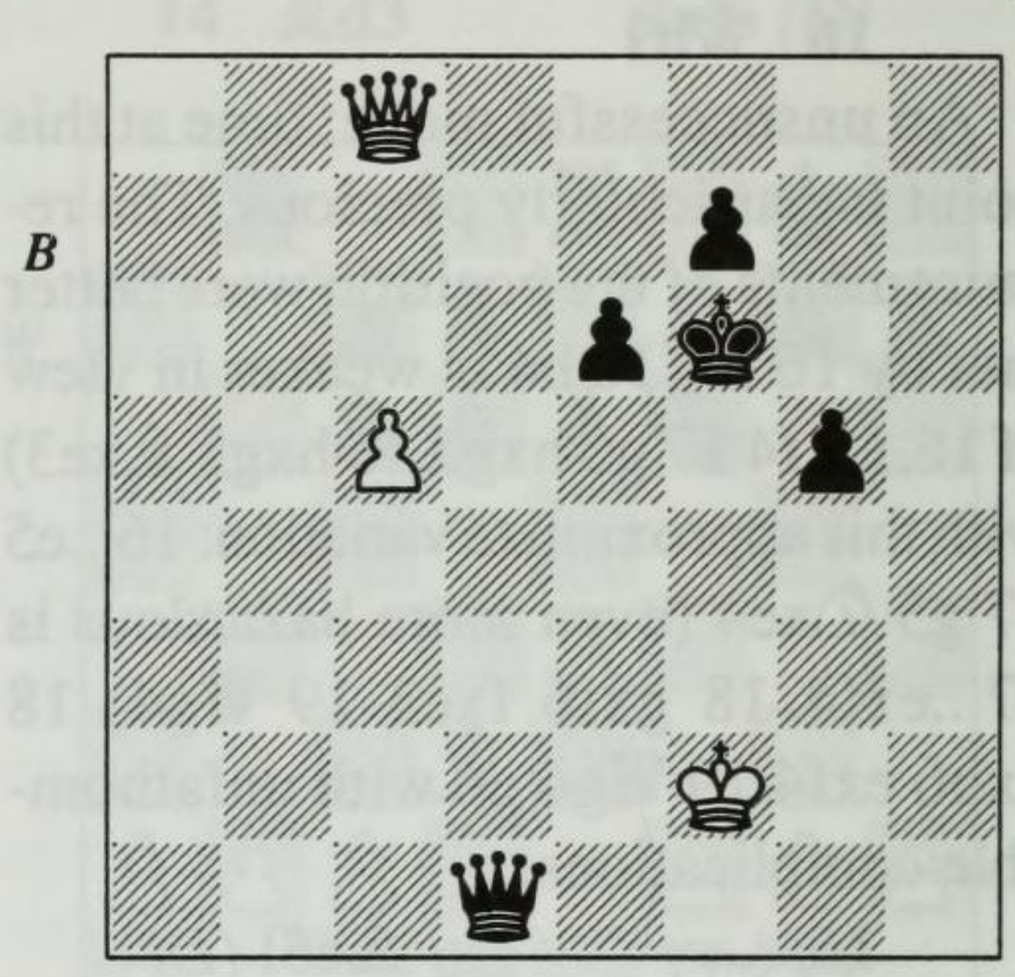
**32 ... ♕d2+**
**33 ♔g1 ♘g6**
**34 ♕xd7 ♕c1+**
**35 ♔g2 ♕xf4**
**36 ♕e8+ ♔h7**
**37 ♕xc6 ♕xg5+**
**38 ♔f1 ♕f4+**
**39 ♔g1 ♕xe5**
**40 ♗xg6+ ♔xg6**
**41 c4 ♕d4+**
**42 ♔f1**

In this position the game was adjourned. White's hopes are associated with the advance of his passed pawn, and, as later becomes clear, with ideas of stalemate!

**42 ... ♕d1+**
**43 ♔f2 ♔f6**

The king clears the way for the g-pawn, the advance of which will create mating threats.

**44 c5 g5**
**45 ♕c8!** *(D)*




The best chance.

**45 ... ♕d2+**
**46 ♔f1 ♕d3+**
**47 ♔f2 g4**
**48 c6**

Hopeless for White is 48 ♕h8+ ♔e7 49 ♕h4+ ♔d7 50 ♕xg4 ♕c2+.

**48 ... ♕f3+**
**49 ♔g1 ♕e3+**

49...g3 would have made the win more difficult (if it did not let it slip altogether): 50 ♕h8+ ♔f5 (50...♔e7 51 ♕h4+) 51 ♕h7+ ♔e5 52 ♕h8+ ♔d5 53 ♕d8+ ♔c4 54 ♕d2 ♕xc6 55 ♕f4+ followed by 56 ♕xf7, and Black's winning chances are problematic.

Black transfers his queen to e2, from where, without restricting the white king too much, it will support the advance of the g-pawn.

**50 ♔g2 ♕e2+**

**51 ♔g1 g3**
**52 ♕h8+ ♔e7**
**53 ♕h4+ ♔d6**
**54 ♕d8+**

To 54 ♕f4+ Black would not have replied 54...♔xc6 55 ♕f3+!, but simply 54...♔d5.

**54 ... ♔xc6**
**55 ♕c8+ ♔d5**
**56 ♕d8+ ♔e4**
**57 ♕h4+ ♔f5**
**58 ♕h7+ ♔e5**
**0-1**

Black's king evades the checks.

Game 88
**Tal – Uhlmann**
*Moscow 1971*
French Defence

I spent a long time considering my first move, but not at the board. Somehow, I very much wanted to surprise the German Grandmaster, but a consideration of various opening moves showed that this was virtually impossible. Therefore I decided to choose 1 e4 in the hope that my fifth move would have some psychological effect, since it leads to a game which is less 'French' in character.

**1 e4 e6**
**2 d4 d5**
**3 ♘d2 c5**
**4 ♘gf3 ♘c6**
**5 ♗b5**

In the last USSR Championship, this continuation (which, incidentally, Alekhine recommended in his time) occurred twice, in Karasev's games with Tseitlin and Vaganian. In the latter game there followed: 5...cxd4 6 ♘xd4 ♗d7 7 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 8 ♗xc6+ bxc6 9 c4 ♘f6? 10 ♕a4 ♕d7 11 e5 with advantage to White. In our preparations we were also happy with White's position after the stronger (according to the commentators) 9...d4 10 0-0 c5 11 f4.

**5 ... dxe4**

Uhlmann is one of those chess players who does not attempt to be too sophisticated, and, as a rule, plays the opening quickly. The fact that he spent more than 20 minutes over his fifth move showed that the psychological 'mine' had worked.

**6 ♘xe4 ♗d7**
**7 ♗g5!** *(D)*

*B*

First and foremost development! The open nature of the position makes every tempo precious.

**7 ... ♕a5+**

On 7...♕b6 White was planning 8 ♕e2 cxd4 9 0-0-0.

**8 ♘c3 cxd4**

In view of the threat of d5, this exchange is practically forced.

**9 ♘xd4**

I very much wanted to sacrifice a piece here: 9 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 10 ♕xd4 ♗xf3 11 gxf3 but in the first place I couldn't see anything concrete in the variation 11...♕xg5 12 ♕a4+ b5! 13 ♘xb5 ♕e5+ 14 ♔f1 ♔e7 and secondly, Black need not accept the sacrifice, but can play without danger, say, 11...♕b4. This second factor persuaded White to cut short any further searching.

**9 ... ♗b4**

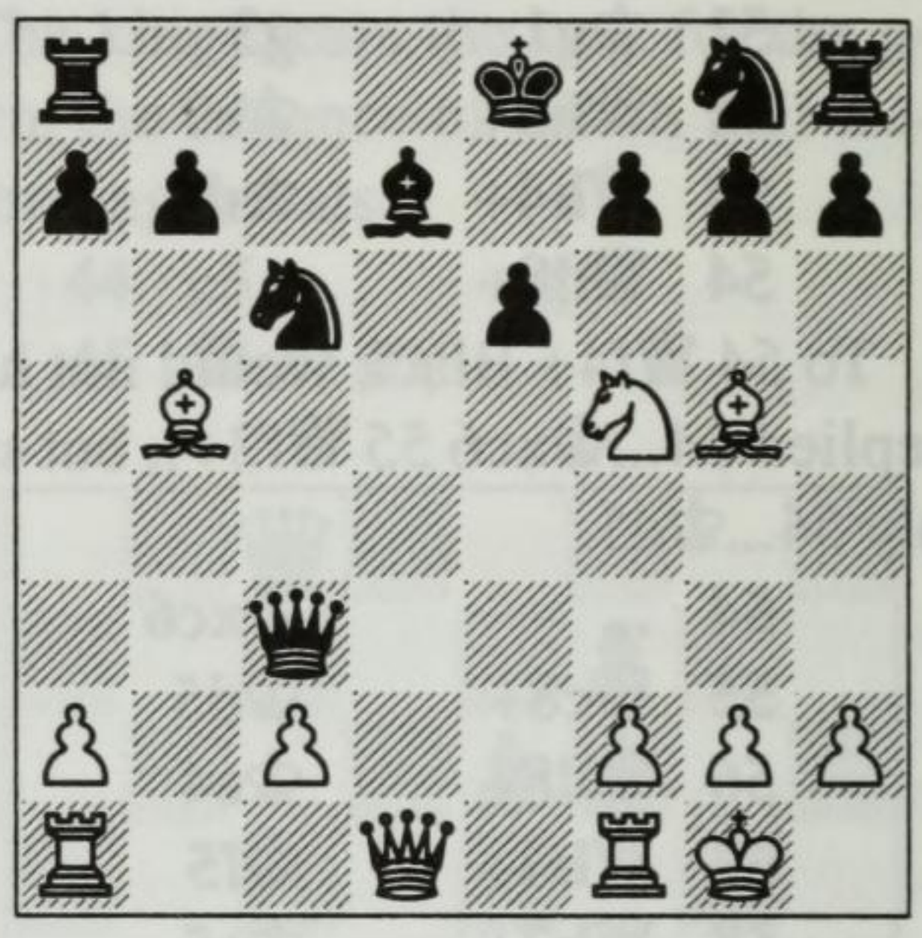
During the game I considered that 9...♗e7 was sounder for my opponent, against which I was planning 10 ♕d2 ♘f6 (not, of course, 10...♗xg5 11 ♕xg5 ♘xd4 12 ♗xd7+) 11 0-0-0 with at any rate a sharp struggle.

**10 0-0 ♗xc3**

**11 bxc3 ♕xc3?**

Most probably the whole idea (borrowed from other variations) of exchanging the dark-squared bishop is bad as there are already too many open files and diagonals! Capturing the c-pawn simply forces White to begin an immediate attack. Evidently, in considering the likely reply 12 ♘f5, the German Grandmaster overlooked something. After the game 11...a6 was suggested, on which there can follow 12 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 13 ♘xc6 ♕xg5 14 ♕d6 ♘e7 15 ♖fd1! ♘xc6 16 ♕d7+ ♔f8 17 ♕xb7 with advantage to White.

**12 ♘f5!** *(D)*




**12 ... exf5**

While it is clear that the opening of another file should lead to a win for White, it is even more obvious that refusing the sacrifice would also lead to Black's defeat.

**13 ♖e1+**

White could have also considered the immediate 13 ♕d6.

**13 ... ♗e6**

**14 ♕d6 a6**

There is nothing better. White's main threat is not so much 15 ♖ad1, but to transfer his bishop (again in analogy with other variations) onto the now open a3-f8 diagonal. Black is unable to prevent this. However, on 14...♘f6 White was nevertheless intending to play 15 ♖ad1 since 15 ♗d2 ♘e4 is not so clear.

**15 ♗d2**

Weaker was 15 ♗a4 b5 16 ♗d2 ♕c4 17 ♗b3 ♖d8! 18 ♕c7 ♖d7.

**15 ... ♕xc2**

**16 ♗b4**

Here there was a false trail: 16 ♖ac1 ♕xc1 17 ♖xc1 axb5 18 ♖xc6 ♖d8!

**16 ... axb5**
**17 ♕f8+ ♔d7**
**18 ♖ed1+!**

Accuracy to the end. 18 ♖ad1+ ♔c7 19 ♕xa8 ♘f6 20 ♗d6+ ♔b6 21 ♕xh8 ♘e4 would have given Black a little counterplay.

**18 ... ♔c7**
**19 ♕xa8**

Now, however, on 19...♘f6 20 ♕xh8 ♘e4 there follows the simple 21 ♗e1, and so the German Grandmaster stopped his clock, on which there remained a minute and a half (**1-0**).

Game 89
**Mukhin – Tal**
*USSR Olympiad, Moscow 1972*
Nimzo-Indian Defence

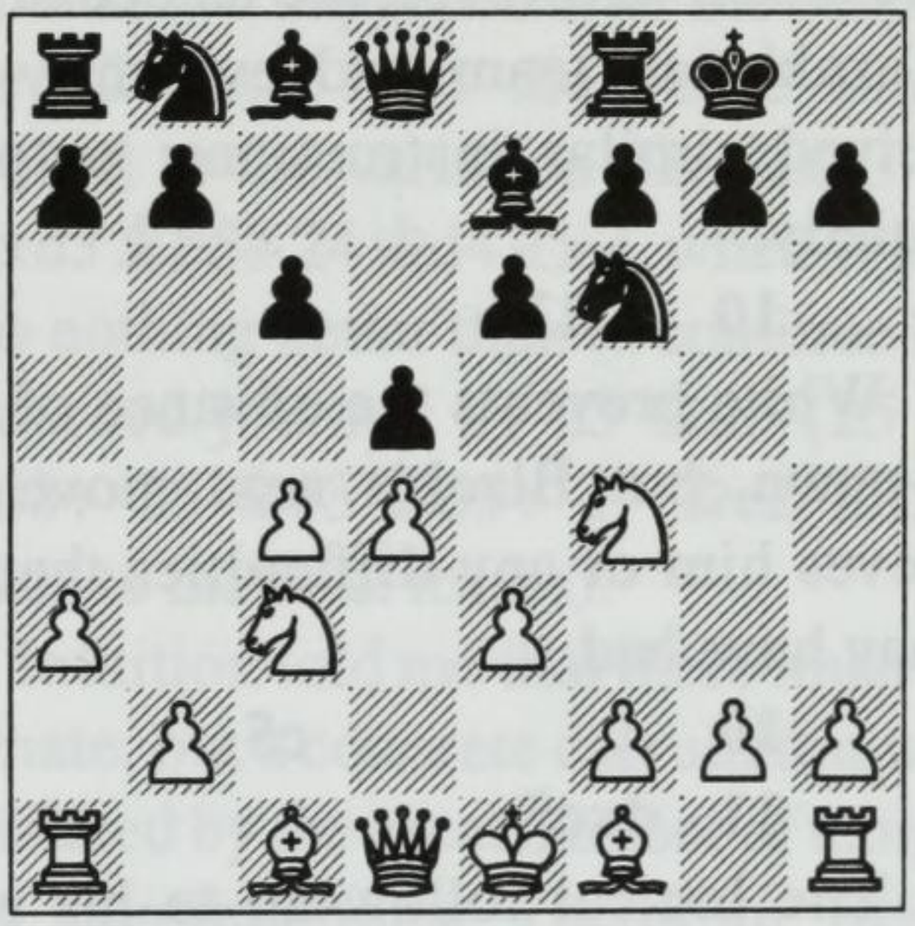
**1 d4 ♘f6**
**2 c4 e6**
**3 ♘c3 ♗b4**
**4 e3 0-0**
**5 ♘e2**

In the recent past this was a fairly popular system. White definitely does not wish to have doubled pawns on the c-file. On the other hand, when the knight has moved to e2 it makes sense for Black to keep his dark-squared bishop, even at the cost of a tempo.

**5 ... d5**
**6 a3 ♗e7**
**7 ♘f4**

7 cxd5 is more often played here, in reply to which Black has a choice between 7...♘xd5 and 7...exd5. Theory seems to give a certain preference to the capture with the knight, promising after it easy equality. More to my taste is the capture with the pawn, which leads to a very tense struggle. Thus my game with Polugaevsky (White) from the 1958 USSR Championship in Riga, as well as numerous lightning games with A. Koblents, developed as follows: 7 cxd5 exd5 8 ♘f4 c6 9 ♗d3 a5 10 0-0 ♘a6 11 f3 ♘c7 12 ♖e1 c5 with a position which is very difficult to assess. In this situation the knight seems to be best placed on c7.

**7 ... c6** *(D)*




**8 ♗d3 dxc4**

There was no point transferring the knight to c7 before White exchanged on d5, while I did not like 8...♘bd7 because of 9 cxd5. Black therefore releases the tension in the centre.

**9 ♗xc4 ♘bd7**

The critical position. If Black succeeds in effecting the advance ...e5, then he will achieve at least full equality. In making my eighth move, however, I was rather afraid of the

sharp 10 ♗xe6!? fxe6 11 ♘xe6 ♕e8 12 ♘xf8 (12 ♘c7 ♕g6 13 ♘xa8 ♕xg2 is much weaker) 12...♘xf8 13 0-0, when White's imposing pawn chain (from d4 to h2), which is ready to be set in motion, may prove dangerous. Black of course has his compensations – he after all has more pieces – but this is the way White should have played, both from the demands of the position, and from his natural inclinations.

I was prepared for this variation, since I had an 'alibi'; it would after all be my opponent who would trigger off the storm. However, the leader of the Kazakhstan team had evidently received similar instructions: to play quietly.

**10 ♘d3**

White prevents the advance of the e-pawn, but Black's next move relieves him of any difficulties that he may have had.

**10 ... c5**

**11 dxc5**

The logical follow-up to his previous move.

**11 ... ♘xc5**

**12 ♘xc5 ♗xc5**

**13 ♕xd8**

One gains the impression that the battle in this game has finished, without having had time to start.

**13 ... ♖xd8**

**14 b4**

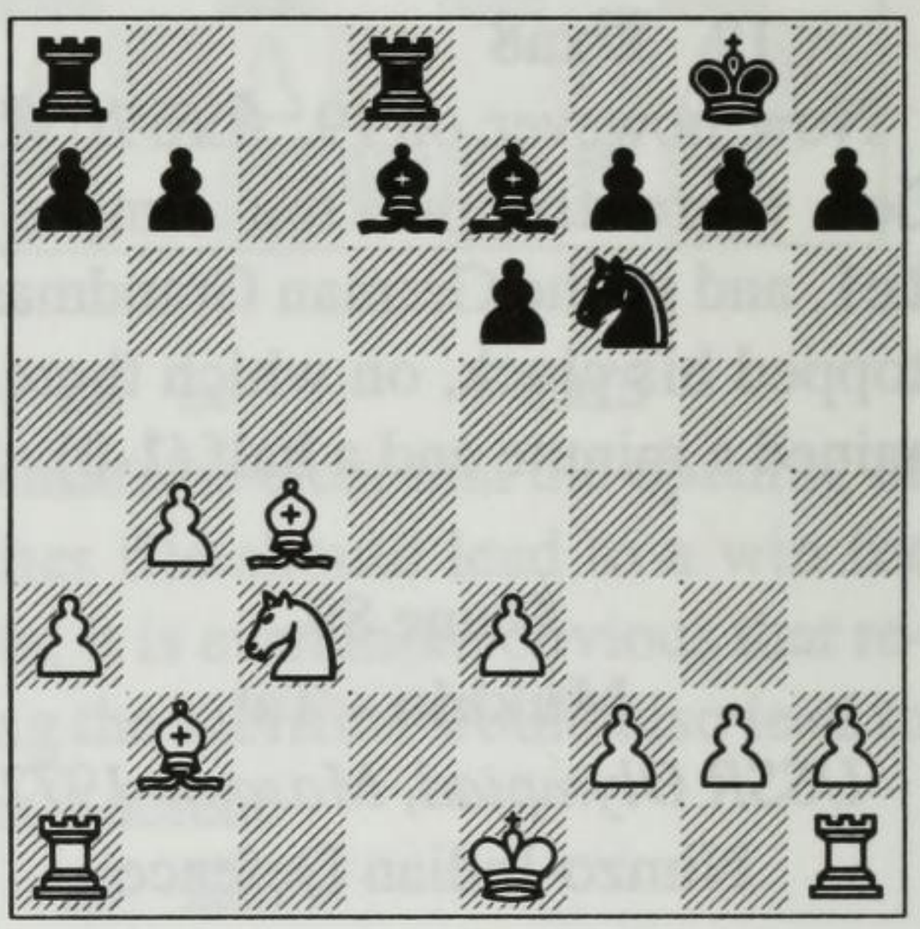
The first inaccuracy. In striving to exploit his extra move, White rather carelessly weakens himself along the c-file, and his pieces on this file soon prove to be vulnerable. 14 ♗d2 was more accurate.

**14 ... ♗e7**

**15 ♗b2**

Consistent, but again hardly good. The immediate 15 ♔e2 was stronger.

**15 ... ♗d7** *(D)*




**16 ♔e2**

But here 16 0-0 should have been given preference. The point is that, although the queens have disappeared, there are still sufficient pieces on the board for the position to have a middlegame character. Thus the position of the king in the centre, which is certainly favourable in endings, turns out to be double-edged.

**16 ... ♖ac8**

**17 ♗d3**

After this plausible move (17 ♗b3 was necessary) White's game goes downhill almost by force.

**17 ... ♗c6**

**18 f3 ♘d7!**

Exploiting the fact that 19 b5 is not dangerous (due to 19...♘e5 20 bxc6

♘xd3 21 cxb7 ♖b8 with a clear advantage) Black intends to transfer his knight to e5 so as to intrude on the square c4, which his opponent incautiously weakened with his 14th move.

Trying to prevent this, Mukhin played ...

**19 ♘e4 f5!**

Little was promised by 19...♗b5 20 ♗xb5 ♖c2+ 21 ♘d2 ♖xb2 22 ♖ab1 with exchanges favourable for White.

**20 ♘d2**

Now White's position becomes indefensible since his king is taken by surprise. 20 ♘f2 was essential, so as defend the bishop on d3, although even in this case Black's position is markedly superior. Thus 20...♗b5 is good, forcing the favourable exchange of light-squared bishops.

**20 ... ♘b6**

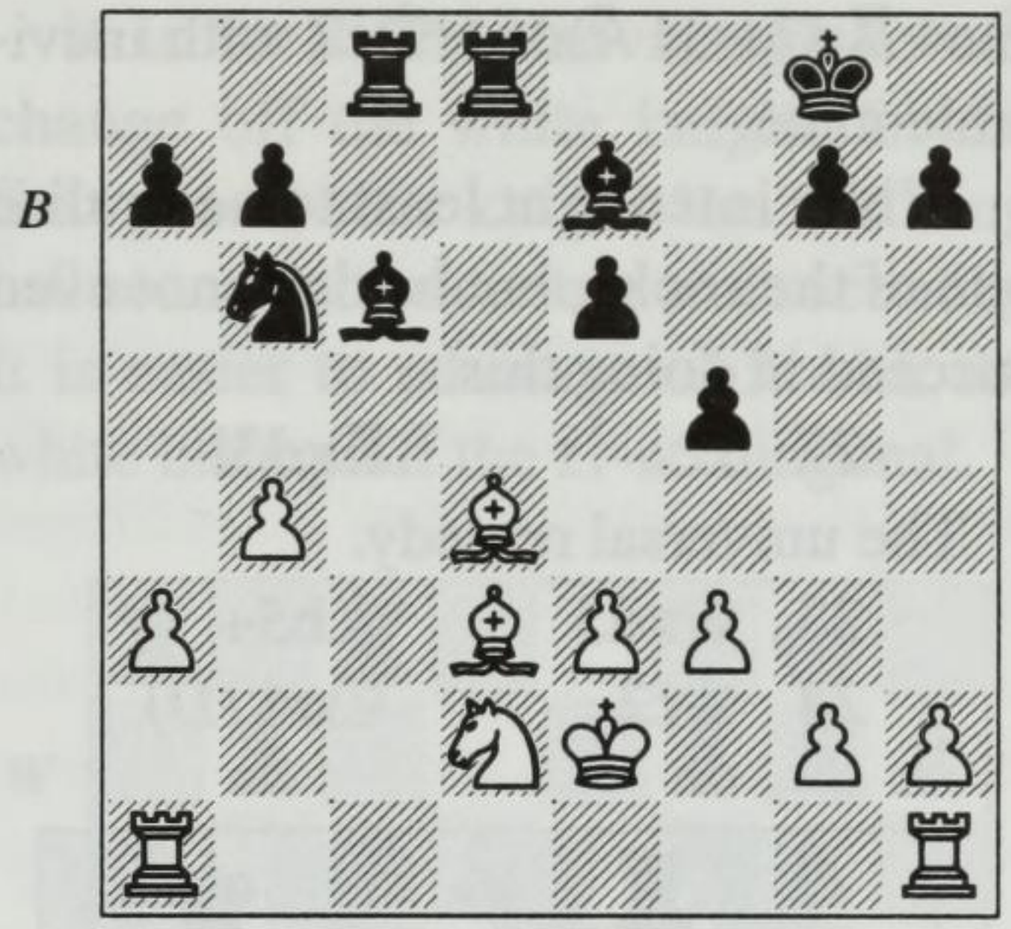
It turns out that it is very difficult for White to meet the threat of 21...♖xd3, which has arisen unnoticed. For example, in reply to 21 b5 the following interesting variation is possible: 21...♖xd3! 22 bxc6 ♖cd8 23 ♗d4 ♖xd2+! 24 ♔xd2 e5 25 cxb7 (or 25 c7 ♖d7 26 ♖ac1 ♘c8) 25...exd4 26 ♖hc1 dxe3+ 27 ♔xe3 ♖b8, remaining with a decisive advantage. White hopes to block the d-file, but it turns out that in this case also his pieces are vulnerable.

**21 ♗d4** *(D)*

**21 ... e5!**

So as to 'find' the bishop on d3 at all costs!

**22 ♗c5**




What a pity! Obviously 22 ♗xb6 ♖xd3! was hopeless for White, but what would have happened after the desperate 22 ♗xe5? At the board Black looked at the variation 22...♖xd3 23 ♔xd3 ♗b5+ 24 ♔d4 ♘a4, when White has nothing better than to continue his enforced journey by 25 ♔d5 (25 e4 ♖d8+ 26 ♔e3 ♖d3+ 27 ♔e2 ♖d5+ leads to material losses).

Intuition told me that there must be a mate, but a concrete calculation was hindered by the great number of tempting continuations. Therefore Black took what was perhaps the most practical decision: to wait until this position occurred, and only then work out the solution.

The win was found that evening while playing over the game – 25...♔f7 26 ♗d4 ♗f6! (with the help of such moves Black weaves his mating net) 27 ♗xf6 gxf6 (more accurate than 27...♔xf6 28 ♘e4+) 28 ♔d6 (there is no other defence against 28...♖d8 mate) 28...♖c6+ 29 ♔d5 (29 ♔d7 ♘b6+ 30 ♔d8 ♖c8 mate) 29...♖c7! 30

♘e4 ♖d7+ 31 ♘d6+ ♔e7 with inevitable mate.

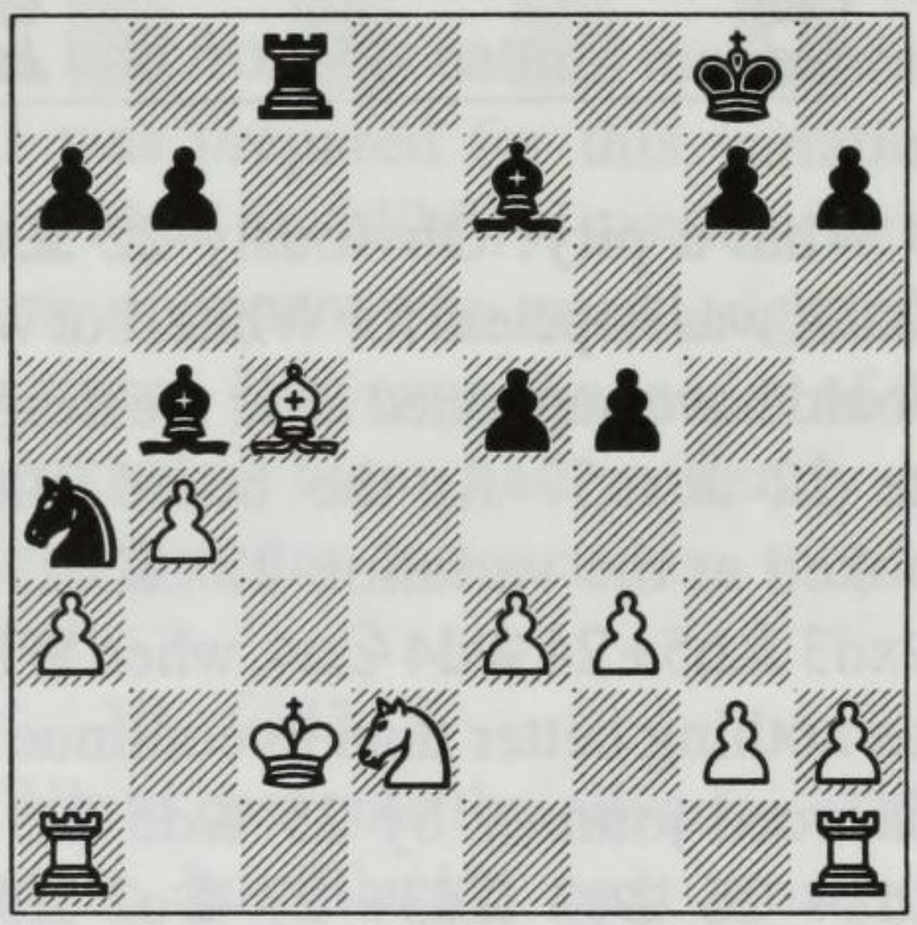
White intends at least to neutralise one of the rooks, but he does not even succeed in doing this.

**22 ... ♖xd3!**

The universal remedy.

**23 ♔xd3 ♗b5+**

**24 ♔c2 ♘a4** *(D)*



*W*

Where is the king to move?

**25 ♔b3**

As a simple analysis shows, all three king moves were roughly equivalent. In reply to 25 ♔d1 I was planning 25...♗f6 26 e4 (otherwise the bishop cannot be saved) 26...b6 27 ♗e3 (27 ♗f2 ♗g5) 27...♖c3 and the black knight breaks through decisively with checks via b2 and d3. The continuation 25 ♔b1 would have led to variations similar to those which occurred in the game.

**25 ... b6!**

**26 ♘c4**

Capturing the bishop would have led to a mating finish: 26 ♗xe7 ♖c3+ 27 ♔a2 ♖c2+ 28 ♔b1 (28 ♔b3 ♖b2 mate) 28...♗d3. With the king on b1 (instead of b3) the game would have been decided by the same operation: 25...b6 26 ♗xe7 ♗d3+ 27 ♔a2 ♖c2+ 28 ♔b3 b5! 29 ♖ab1 (29 ♘c4 ♖c3+) 29...♖xd2.

**26 ... bxc5**

**27 ♘xe5 cxb4**

**28 ♖ac1 ♘c5+**

**29 ♔xb4 a6!**

The 'cleanest' way. Against the numerous threats there is no defence.

**0-1**

## Game 90
## Tal – Jakobsen
*Skopje Olympiad 1972*
Sicilian Defence

The following game was played in the preliminaries of the 20th Olympiad, when the points situation was relatively unimportant. The result of each game did not play a decisive role, and therefore the game was less influenced by 'distracting' factors. This probably explains, to a large degree, why my game with O. Jakobsen turned out better, in my opinion, than any other game.

**1 e4 c5**

**2 ♘f3 d6**

**3 d4 cxd4**

**4 ♕xd4**

My opponent made his first three moves suspiciously quickly, and so I decided not to venture into a theoretical dispute, preferring the relatively

unusual (though fairly popular in recent times) capture with the queen.

**4 ... ♗d7**
**5 c4 ♘c6**
**6 ♕d2 ♘f6**

In a number of games at the Olympiad, Black carried out here the curious manoeuvre 6...g6 7 ♘c3 ♗h6!? 8 ♕d1 ♗g7 thus preventing the fianchetto development of White's queen's bishop.

**7 ♘c3 g6**
**8 b3 ♗g7**
**9 ♗b2 0-0**
**10 ♗e2**

More accurate, perhaps, was 10 h3, preventing Black's ...♗g4.

**10 ... ♕a5**
**11 ♖b1**

The only satisfactory defence against the threat of 11...♘xe4.

**11 ... a6**
**12 a3**

Black would have no difficulties after 12 0-0 b5! but now, in answer to 12...b5, 13 b4 is unpleasant, and on 13...♕b6 perhaps even 14 c5 (so that if 14...dxc5, then 15 e5).

**12 ... ♖fc8**

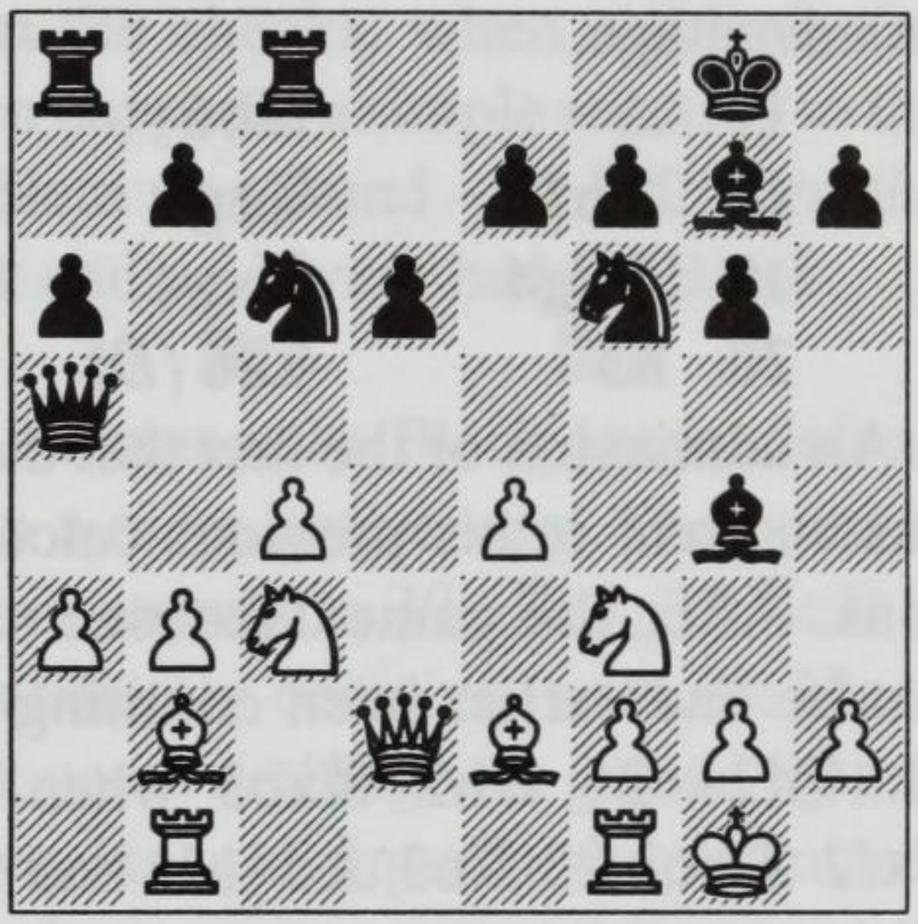
In answer to the advance of White's b-pawn Black intends to retreat his queen to d8, when both his rooks can take an active part in play on the queenside.

**13 0-0**

Here again 13 h3 would have given White good chances of keeping some advantage.

**13 ... ♗g4!** *(D)*

*W*



It is to Black's advantage to exchange off the white knight. In the first place, this knight has a strong influence on the centre, and secondly, it is easier to advance ...b5 with the white bishop off the f1-a6 diagonal.

**14 ♖fe1 ♗xf3**
**15 ♗xf3 ♖ab8**

Black's wish to carry out his queenside advance 'with every convenience' leads him into great difficulties, since now it has to be deferred for some time. In answer to 15...b5 my opponent was evidently unhappy about the reply 16 e5 (which is what I would have played). However, in this case Black has a satisfactory game after 16...dxe5 (the exchange sacrifice 16...♘xe5!? is also not without interest) 17 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 18 ♖xe5 (weaker is 18 cxb5 axb5 19 ♖xe5 ♘g4! 20 ♖xb5 ♕c7) 18...♕c7! 19 ♕e2 e6 and the sacrifice of two pieces for a rook, 20 cxb5 ♖xc3 21 b6 ♕c6 22 ♗xc3 ♕xc3, is rather double-edged.

**16 ♗e2!**

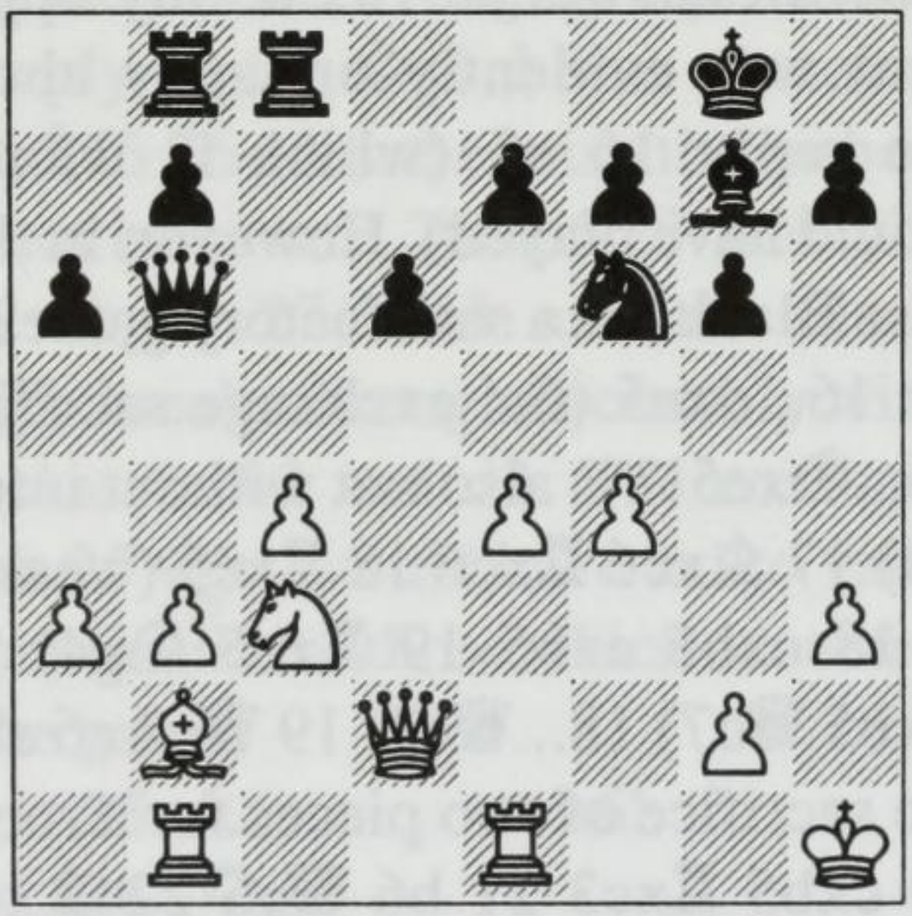
Naturally. Now 16...b5 leads to the loss of a pawn after 17 b4.

**16 ... ♘e5**
**17 f4!**

Despite the apparent weakening of the f2-square, this move is perfectly playable, and in addition gives White the advantage.

**17 ... ♕b6+**
**18 ♔h1 ♘eg4**
**19 ♗xg4 ♘xg4**
**20 h3 ♘f6** *(D)*

An admission of the fact that there was an error in his previous calculations. After the game Jakobsen said that he had earlier been counting on 20...♘f2+ 21 ♔h2 ♕xb3 when 22 ♕xf2 ♗xc3 23 ♖e3 ♗d4! is bad for White, but White has a forced win by 22 ♘d5. The following variation leads to a difficult rook ending for Black: 20...♘f2+ 21 ♔h2 ♕d4 22 ♕xd4 ♗xd4 23 ♘d5! ♗xb2 24 ♘xe7+ ♔f8 25 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 26 ♖xb2 ♘d3 27 ♖eb1.



**21 ♘d5**

Here White stood at the parting of the ways. 21 e5 was very tempting, but I rejected it since after 21...dxe5 22 fxe5 ♖d8! the white queen has no really good move. In particular, in answer to 23 ♕g5 the piece sacrifice 23...♕xb3 is possible. White settled for a quieter continuation, which, so he thought, should give him an irresistible attack. Things turned out to be not so simple, however.

**21 ... ♘xd5**
**22 exd5**

The plausible intermediate move 22 ♗xg7 would have been an instructive mistake in view of 22...♘xf4! 23 ♗d4 ♕c7 (24 ♕xf4 e5).

**22 ... ♗xb2**
**23 ♖xb2 ♕c7**
**24 f5**

This was the position that White had in mind when making his 21st move. With the queen able to move along the c1-h6 diagonal, and the rook along the second rank, things look hopeless for Black. Jakobsen cleverly finds some counterplay.

**24 ... b5!**

Better late than never!

**25 fxg6**

After 25 ♕g5 immediately I didn't see how to give mate if Black continued 25...f6 26 ♕g4 (or 26 ♕h6 g5) 26...bxc4.

**25 ... hxg6**
**26 ♕g5**

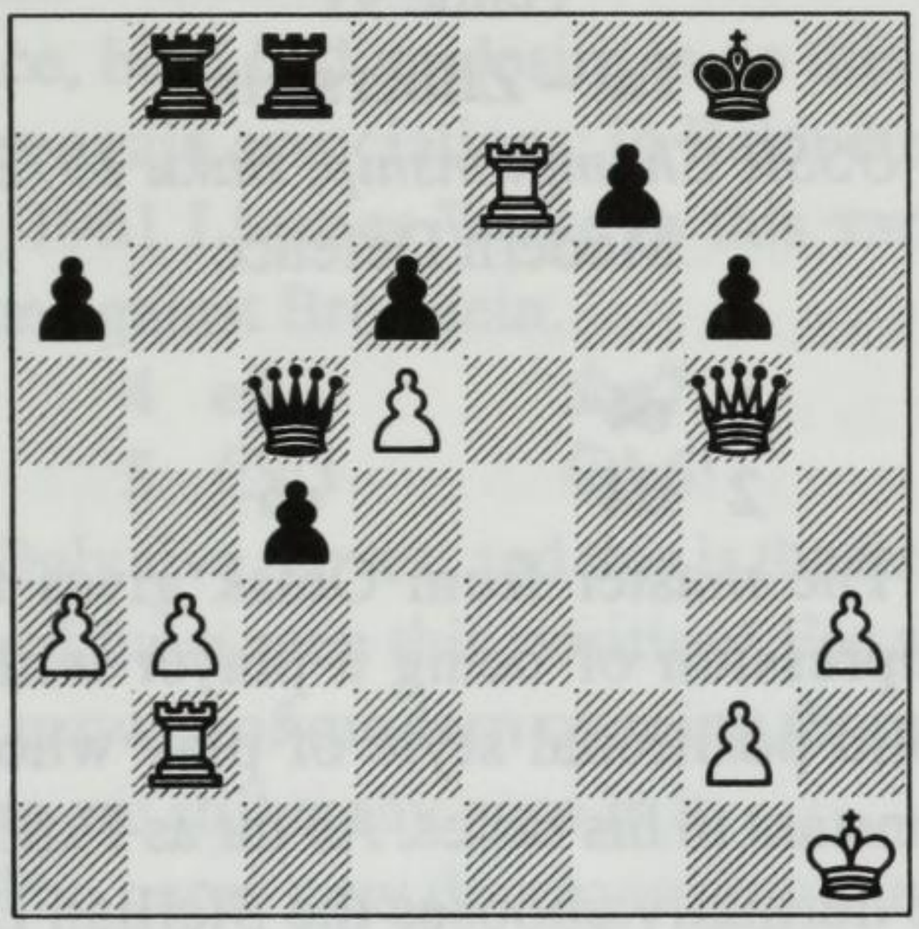
Now passive defence quickly leads Black to defeat, for example 26...♖b7 27 ♖be2 ♖e8 28 ♖e6! ♔g7 29 ♖xg6+!

fxg6 30 ♖e6. The decisive blow may also be inflicted at f7.

**26 ... bxc4**

**27 ♖xe7 ♕c5!** *(D)*

White would have only minor technical difficulties to overcome after 27...c3 28 ♖f2 (but not, of course, 28 ♖xc7?? cxb2) 28...c2 29 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 30 ♕c1.




It was here that I realised, somewhat to my surprise, that Black's counterplay had become quite serious. In my preliminary calculations I had been planning 28 b4 c3 29 ♖be2 ♕d4! 30 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 31 ♖e7+ ♔f8 32 ♖h7, but at the last moment noticed that Black has the counter-sacrifice 32...♕g7!, which forces a draw. I had to think again, and after lengthy reflection I played ...

**28 ♕f6 ♕xd5**

The only move. 28...♖f8 lost immediately to 29 ♖e4!

**29 bxc4 ♕xc4**

Besides this move, I also had to consider 29...♕f5. Time and again White worked through the variations of the complicated ending resulting after 30 ♖xb8 ♕xf6! (30...♖xb8 31 ♖xf7!) 31 ♖xc8+ ♔g7 32 ♖cc7 ♕f1+ 33 ♔h2 ♕f4+ 34 ♔g1 ♔h6! 35 ♖xf7 ♕e3+ etc., in an attempt to establish whether the white king can escape from the checks, when suddenly (as often happens) a simple solution to the problem was found – 30 ♖f2!, and the rook ending is very bad for Black.

**30 ♖f2 ♖f8**

Unfortunately, Black cannot defend f7 in a more active way. The point is that in answer to 30...♖c7, 31 ♖c2! is immediately decisive (with the black rook on c8 nothing was gained by this move, since the queen simply moves away).

**31 ♖f4 ♕c1+**

**32 ♔h2**

Black's counter-attack along the eighth rank may appear serious, but a closer examination shows that this is not so. Jakobsen came to the same conclusion, since he now played ...

**32 ... ♕b2**

The point is that on the natural 32...♖b1 White was planning 33 ♖g4! ♕g1+ (33...♕c2 loses immediately to 34 ♖xf7! ♖xf7 35 ♖xg6+ ♕xg6 36 ♕xg6+) 34 ♔g3 ♖b3+ 35 ♔h4 ♕b1 36 ♖xf7! ♖xf7 (nothing is gained by 36...♕e1+ 37 g3) 37 ♖xg6+ ♕xg6 38 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 39 ♕xd6+ ♔g8 and 40 ♕xa6 if there is nothing better.

**33 ♖xf7!**

Once again a rook ending is reached.

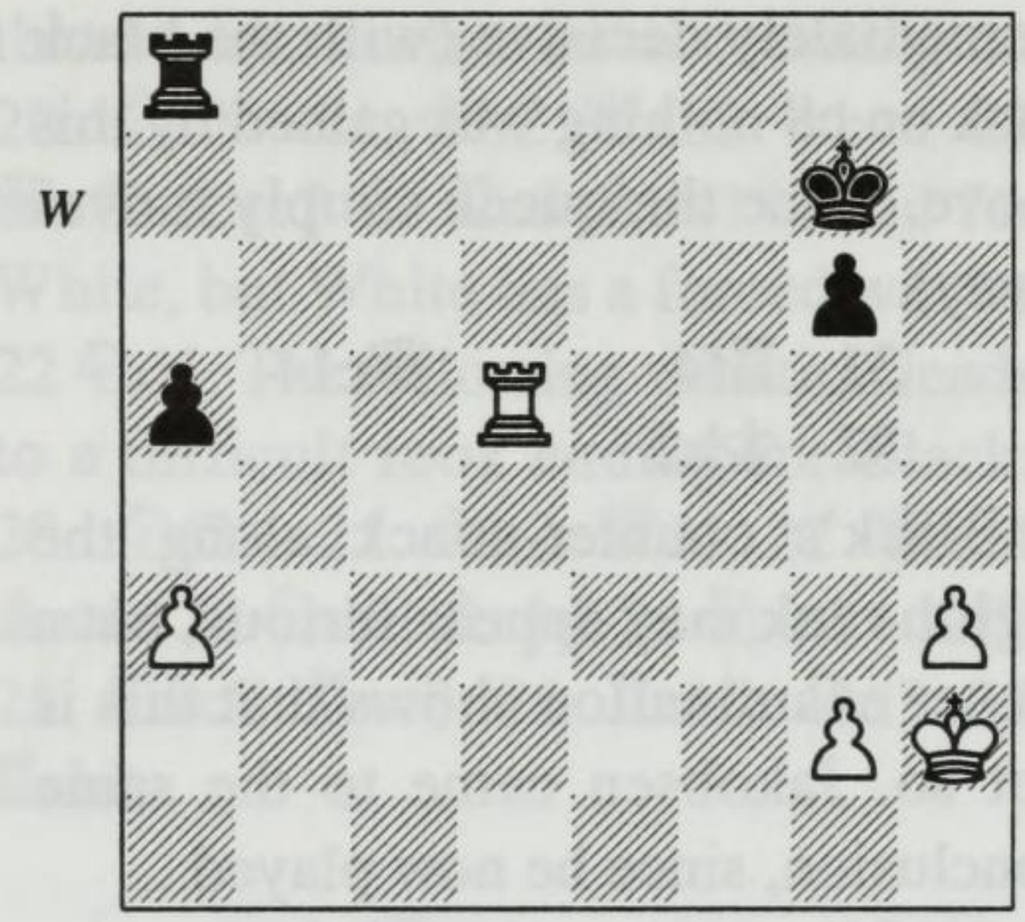
**33 ... ♕xf6**
**34 ♖7xf6**

Black cannot maintain material equality. It is not difficult to establish that the pawn ending after 34...♔g7 35 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 36 ♖xf8 ♔xf8 is hopeless for him.

**34 ... ♖xf6**
**35 ♖xf6 ♔g7**

35...♖d8 36 ♖xg6+ ♔f7 37 ♖g4 also offers no hope of saving the game.

**36 ♖xd6 a5**
**37 ♖d5 ♖a8** *(D)*




**38 a4!**

The final point. White restricts the mobility of the enemy rook, whereupon the outcome of the game is settled by the intrusion of his king. Within a few moves Black will be forced to give up a second pawn. The concluding phase of the game is easily understood.

**38 ... ♖a6**
**39 ♔g3 ♔f6**
**40 ♔f4 ♔e6**
**41 ♖b5 ♔f6**
**42 ♖c5 ♖b6**
**43 ♖xa5 ♖b4+**
**44 ♔g3**

Here the game was adjourned, but after a brief joint analysis Black resigned (**1-0**). Jakobsen's sealed move was **44...♖b3+**.

Game 91

## Tal – Zilberstein

*USSR Championship, Baku 1972*

Modern Defence

**1 e4 g6**
**2 d4 c6**

The master from Omsk gives the impression of being a player with a solid positional style of play who is constant in his tastes. As far as I know, he normally chooses the Sicilian Defence against 1 e4, so here I stopped to think. My opponent had made his first moves quickly – perhaps he knows my game with Kolarov (European Team Championship, 1970), where there occurred 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 h3, and has prepared something.

Then other associations began to arise. Prior to the USSR Championship, Zilberstein had been playing in the International Tournament at Kislovodsk, and among the participants was Gurgenidze, a fervent supporter of the systems with ...c6 and ...g6. The players in the Championship at Baku were not familiar with the games from the Kislovodsk Tournament. Perhaps there was a trap in store for me in this

variation? This is why I decided to invite my opponent to go into a position on King's Indian lines, since (as was also established during preparation) Zilberstein does not play this opening as Black.

**3 c4 d5**

Now White can, if he wishes, transpose by 4 exd5 cxd5 5 ♘c3 into the Panov Variation of the Caro-Kann Defence, but I had no desire to do this – once again associations: in Baku during 1961 I lost as White in this variation against Bronstein.

**4 e5 ♗g7**
**5 ♘c3 ♘h6!**

Only five moves, and this is the first time I have seen this position! For all the growth of modern opening theory there are still many gaps in it.

The game now develops along unusual lines. My first thought was to refute the knight move by 6 ♗f4 with the threat of 7 ♕d2, but I did not like the fact that Black would transfer his knight to f7 after 6...f6, and would begin a siege of e5, which had appeared to be the most strongly supported object in White's position. Black need not fear the possible loss of a pawn (6...f6 7 exf6 exf6 8 cxd5 cxd5 9 ♕b3 0-0) since he is well ahead of his opponent in development.

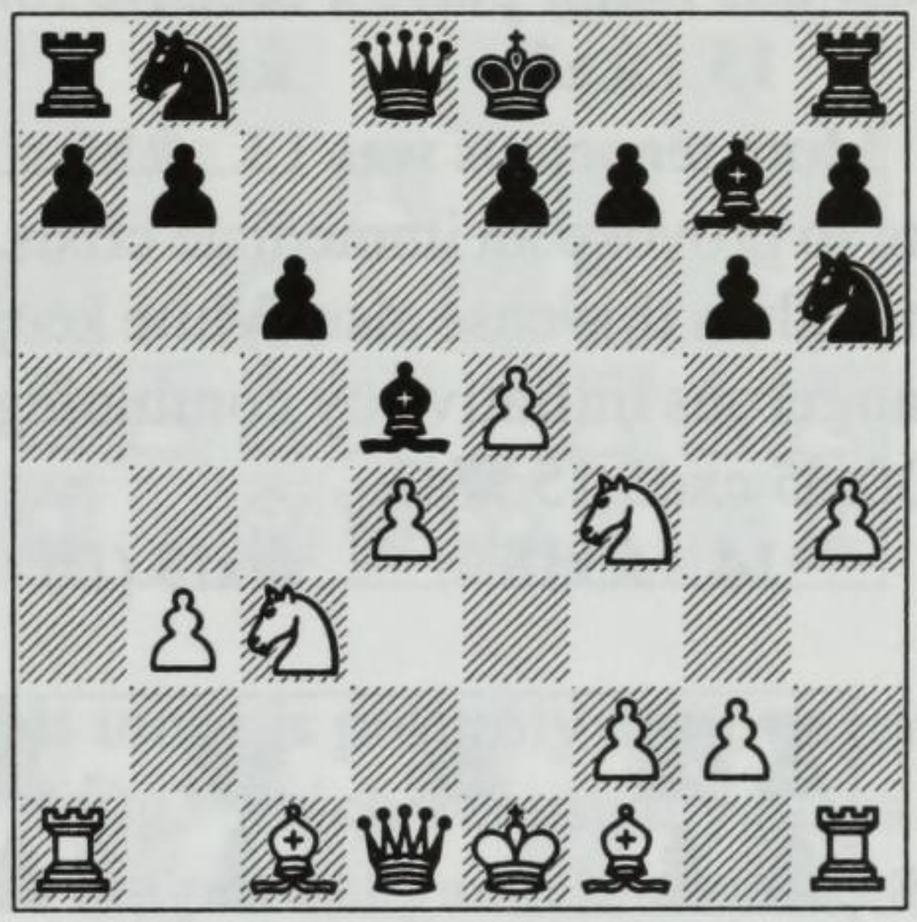
**6 h4**

The normal reaction to the flank development of the bishop. Black should perhaps have continued his plan by 6...f6. After 7 h5 g5 8 f4 g4 a position would have arisen with good points for both sides. I consider that, since the e5-square is supported, White has the better position, but perhaps this is an over-optimistic assessment.

**6 ... ♗e6**
**7 ♘h3 dxc4**
**8 ♘f4 ♗d5**
**9 b3 cxb3**
**10 axb3** *(D)*

Weaker is 10 ♘fxd5 cxd5 11 ♕xb3 ♘c6. The idea of the pawn sacrifice is to hinder the development of Black's queenside.

*B*



**10 ... e6**

But not 10...f6 11 ♘cxd5 cxd5 12 ♘e6.

**11 ♗d3 ♘f5**

Black's desire to activate his knight is understandable, but now White gains a significant advantage. In answer to 11...0-0 I was planning 12 ♘cxd5 cxd5 13 ♘h5 gxh5 14 ♕xh5 f5 (14...♘f5 15 g4) 15 ♗xh6 with some positional advantage and material equality. Also insufficient was 11...♕b6, on which there could follow

12 ♘fxd5, when both 12...cxd5 13 ♗a3 and 12...exd5 13 ♗c2 are dangerous for Black. The only move I was really worried about was 11...♗xg2!?, after which I hadn't decided how to take the piece: either 12 ♘xg2 ♕xd4 13 ♗b2 ♕xe5+ 14 ♔f1, or 12 ♖g1 ♕xd4 13 ♘fe2 ♕xe5 14 ♖xg2. I prefer the first variation, even though Black remains with three pawns for his piece.

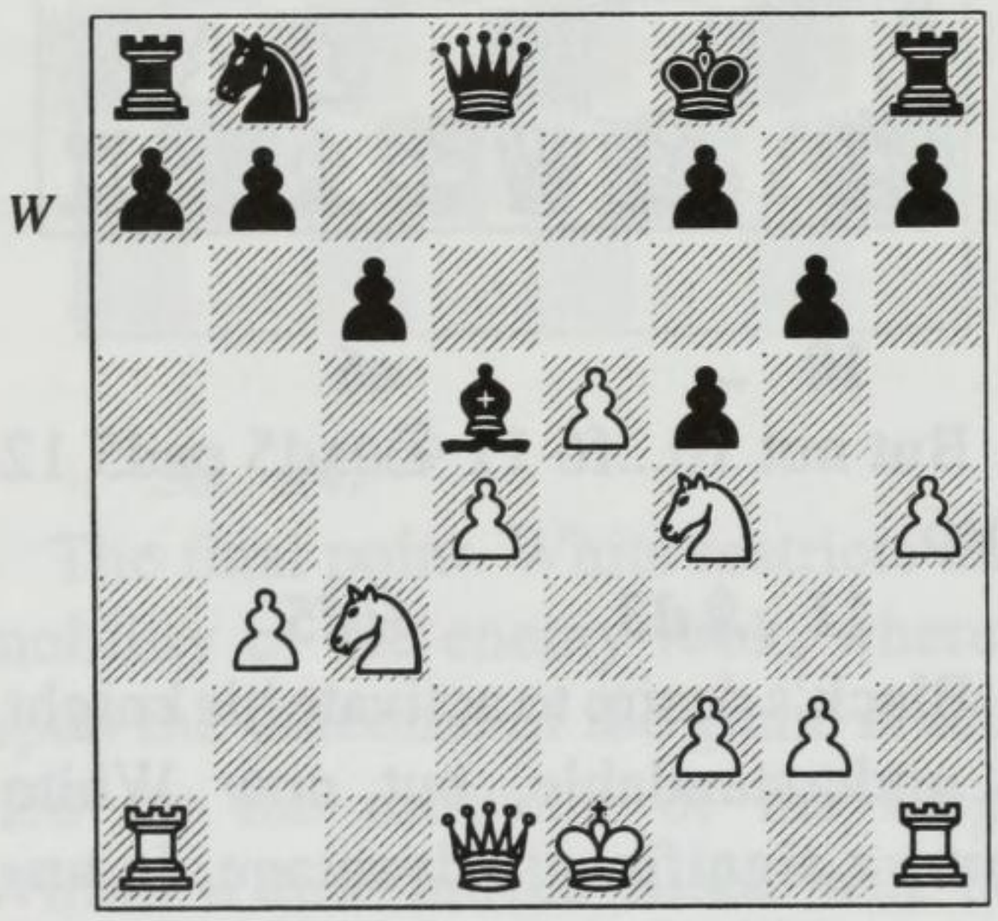
**12 ♗xf5 exf5**

Black is forced to weaken d5, and later this factor plays a decisive role.

**13 ♗a3 ♗f8**

More tenacious was 13...♗h6 striving to provoke an immediate crisis, although in this case also White keeps a dangerous initiative by continuing 14 ♘fxd5 cxd5 15 ♕d3.

**14 ♗xf8 ♔xf8** *(D)*



**15 ♕d2**

Black does not wish to allow the queen in at h6, but now 15...h5 loses to 16 ♘cxd5 exd5 17 ♕b4+ ♕e7 18 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 19 ♘xd5+ and 20 ♘b6.

**15 ... ♗e6**

Black frees the square f7 for his king (in the case of 16 ♘xe6+ fxe6 17 ♕h6+), but now a well-known axiom becomes applicable: with the opponent's pieces undeveloped, a central breakthrough is the most effective.

**16 ♖d1 ♕e7**

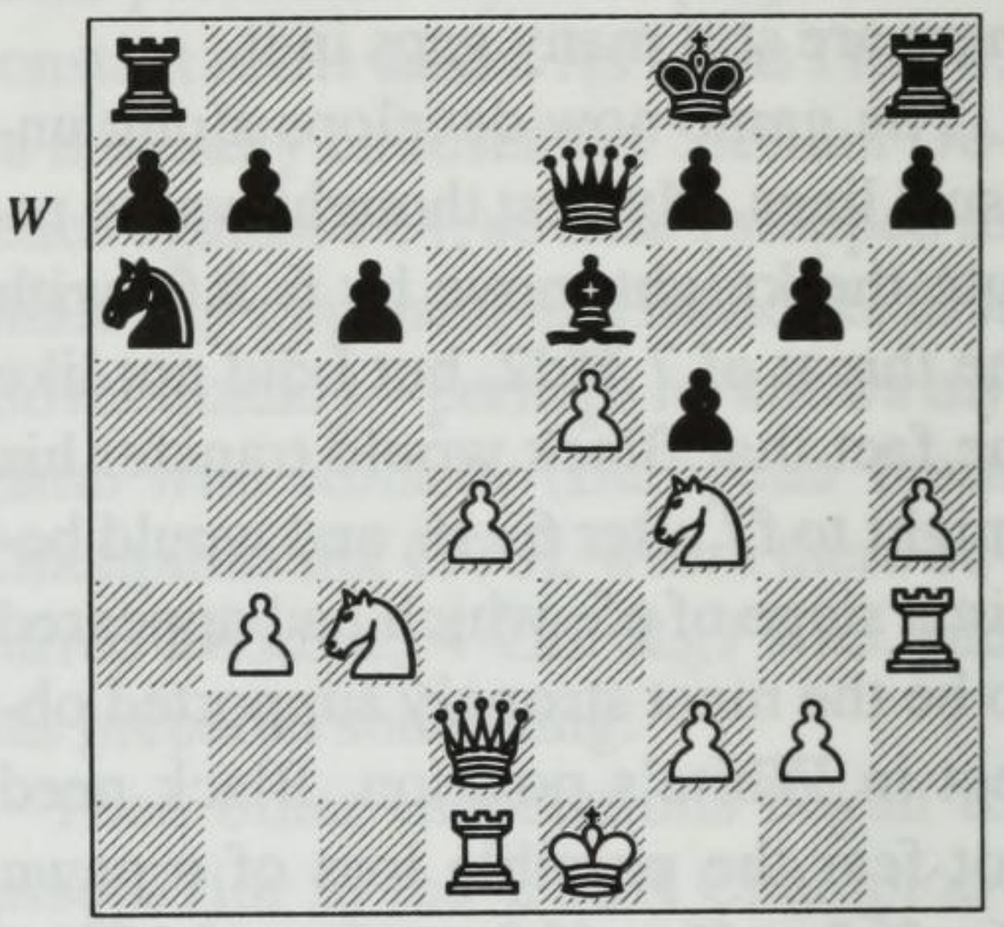
To hinder 17 d5. After 16...♘a6 17 d5 cxd5 18 ♘cxd5 Black is defenceless.

**17 ♖h3!**

With the king's rook coming into play as well, the struggle is essentially at an end.

**17 ... ♘a6** *(D)*

No better was 17...♗xb3 18 ♖b1 ♗c4 19 d5.



**18 d5 cxd5**
**19 ♘fxd5 ♗xd5**
**20 ♘xd5!**

Strange as it may seem, the plausible 20 ♕h6+ ♔g8 21 ♘xd5 ♕xe5+ 22 ♖e3 ♕g7 23 ♕g5 is less convincing because of 23...h6 and is, in any case, a less speedy solution, although

even here 24 ♘f6+ ♔f8 25 ♘d7+ ♔g8 26 ♕e7 would give White an irresistible attack.

**20 ... ♕xe5+**

**21 ♖e3 ♕d6**

On 21...♕g7, 22 ♘c7! ♘xc7 23 ♕d8+ is instantly decisive.

**22 ♕c3 f6**

**23 ♘c7! 1-0**

## Game 92
## Tal – Shamkovich
*USSR Championship, Baku 1972*
Caro-Kann Defence

Chess players, as a rule, are very revengeful people. At any rate, the fact that in the previous Championship of the country it was Shamkovich who inflicted on the tournament leader Tal his first defeat in the 8th round was, perhaps, one of the inspiring stimuli for the Riga player before the start of the game given below. For 'invigoration' this game was once again played through before the start of the 16th round here in Baku. There were some very clear analogies. In both cases Shamkovich had Black. Prior to this game Tal was again undefeated. Also, arithmetically the number 16 in some way resembles 8. In order that the similarity should be complete, it was decided to begin the game with the move ...

**1 e4 c6**

Bravo! We'd already seen this before.

**2 d4 d5**

**3 ♘c3 dxe4**

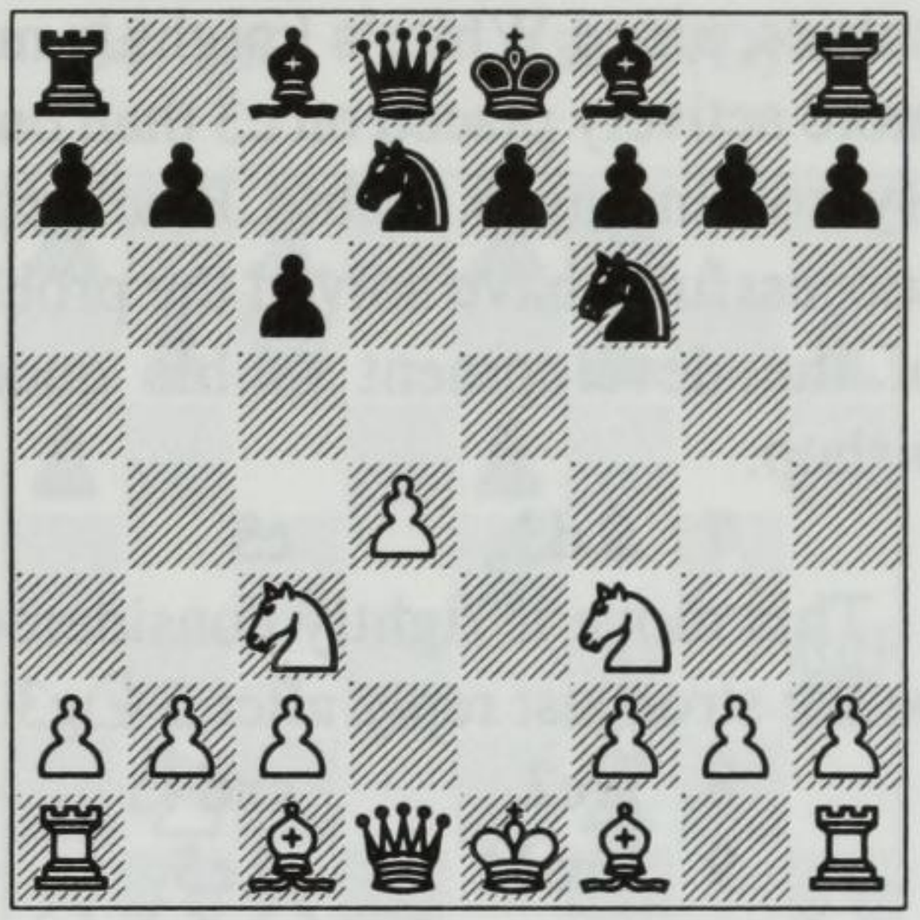
**4 ♘xe4 ♘d7**

In the game mentioned Shamkovich played 4...♗f5, but he had every justification for assuming that the Leningrad game would not repeat itself completely.

**5 ♘f3 ♘gf6**

**6 ♘c3** *(D)*

*B*



This move is probably no stronger than 6 ♘g3 which Tal usually plays. But in the present game it turned out to be highly venomous. The point is that this is apparently the first occasion on which the Moscow grandmaster had adopted the system with 4...♘d7, and it was clear that Black believed in the constancy of Tal's opening tastes. Regarding the move made by White, it was known to the Riga player from the time when he was just starting to play chess. In the 1946 Moscow Championship a very beautiful miniature was played between Bronstein and Kotov in which the winner successfully adopted this

retreat of the knight: 6 ♘c3 e6 7 ♗d3 ♗e7 8 0-0 c5 9 ♕e2 cxd4 10 ♘xd4 0-0 11 ♗g5 ♘c5 12 ♖ad1 ♘xd3 13 ♖xd3 ♕c7 14 ♘db5 ♕c6 15 ♖fd1 b6 16 ♘d4 ♕c7 17 ♖g3 ♔h8 18 ♘cb5 ♕b7 19 ♕e5 a6 20 ♘c3 ♘d7 21 ♗h6 1-0.

**6 ... e6**

Strange as it may seem, after this move Black encounters certain difficulties, since White's knight is much more actively placed on c3 than on g3. By continuing 6...♘b6! Black could successfully have solved the problem of the development of his queen's bishop.

**7 ♗d3 c5**

This move is rightly considered to be the strongest reply after 5 ♘g3.

**8 ♕e2 cxd4**

**9 ♘xd4 ♗c5**

In reply to 9...♘c5 the following line is unpleasant for Black: 10 ♗b5+ ♗d7 11 ♗g5 ♗xb5 12 ♕xb5+ ♕d7 13 0-0-0 with the threat of 14 ♘xe6.

**10 ♘b3 ♗d6**

A move which shows that for the Moscow Grandmaster, a lover of active play, the Caro-Kann Defence is not a profession, but at best a hobby. Any other retreat by the bishop, say, to b6, or to e7, which is the most natural, would have been sounder. Evidently Black did not want to surrender the h2-b8 diagonal to his opponent, but now he gets into considerable difficulties.

**11 ♗g5**

The natural reaction. White hastens to occupy the open d-file with his rook. On 11...0-0, 12 ♗xh7+ is already possible (12...♔xh7 13 ♕d3+).

**11 ... a6**

**12 0-0-0 ♕c7**

**13 ♔b1**

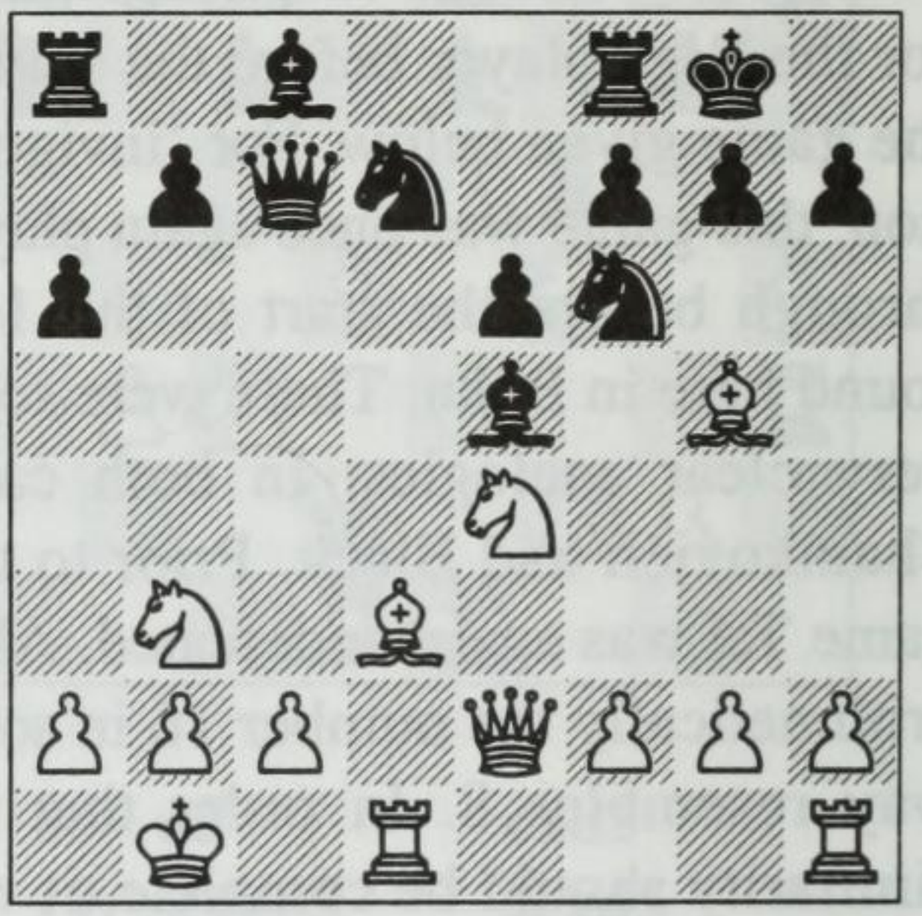
So as to deny Black the bishop check at f4.

**13 ... 0-0**

**14 ♘e4 ♗e5** *(D)*

It is difficult to criticise Black for this move. The point is that after 14...♗e7 15 h4 he simply has a bad position, since he cannot play 15...b5 16 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 17 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 18 ♕e4. However, perhaps there was some sense in playing the bishop to e5 on his 13th move, before castling, so as to be able to answer 14 ♘e4 with 14...♘d5, although even in this case White has an undisputed advantage after the simple 15 g3.

W



**15 f4!**

An obvious and, at the same time, decisive continuation. Black is forced to capture the pawn, because in reply to 15...♘xe4 16 ♕xe4 f5 White can

simply retreat his queen, say, to e2, and on 17...h6 can play 18 h4. With the loss of his pawn on e6, Black's position will collapse.

**15 ... ♗xf4**
**16 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6**

After 16...gxf6 17 ♕e4 Black loses immediately.

**17 ♗xf6 gxf6**
**18 ♕g4+ ♔h8**

Black loses a piece after 18...♗g5 19 h4 ♕f4 20 ♕h5 ♗h6 21 ♖df1.

**19 ♖hf1 ♗e5**

Also forced.

**20 ♗xh7!**

This is considerably more accurate than the showy 20 ♖xf6 when Black has time to bring his rook into the defence. After 20...♖g8 21 ♕h5 ♖g7 22 ♖h6 f5 White has no forcing continuation of the attack.

**20 ... f5**

Clearly, Black is mated along the h-file if he captures the bishop.

**21 ♕h4**

Perhaps 21 ♕h5 was even stronger, as will be seen from the note to the following move.

**21 ... ♔g7**
**22 ♖f3 ♖e8**

Here Black could have avoided the mating attack by continuing 22...♗f6 23 ♖g3+ ♕xg3 24 ♕xg3+ ♔xh7 although his position, without doubt, remains hopeless. With the white queen on h5, Black would not have had this opportunity. White made his 21st move on general considerations (control over the squares e7 and d8).

**23 g4**

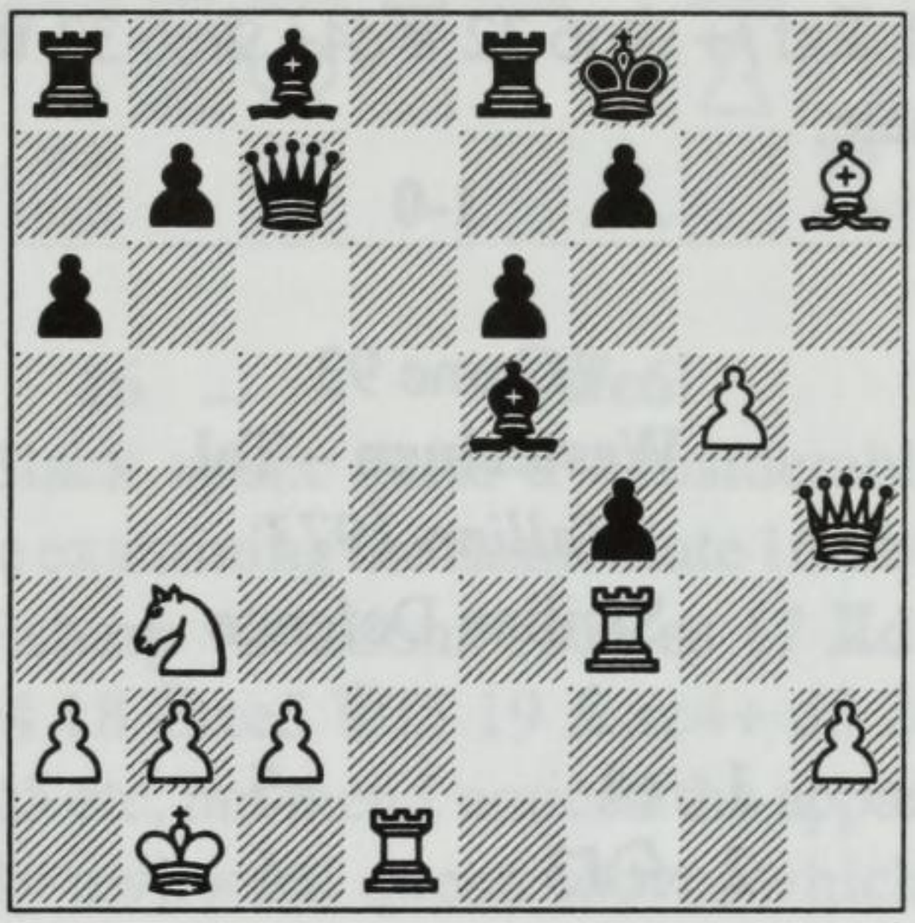
23 ♖dd3 also looks quite good, but White goes in for a variation which he had already prepared.

**23 ... f4**

Black cannot allow the opening of the g-file. The following continuation leads to mate: 23...♕e7 24 ♕h5! ♖h8 25 gxf5 ♖xh7 26 ♖g1+ ♔h8 27 ♕xh7+!

**24 g5 ♔f8** *(D)*

*W*



**25 ♖xf4!**

The quickest way to conclude the game.

**25 ... ♗xf4**

In reply to 25...f5 White was intending 26 gxf6 ♗xf4 27 ♗g6. On 25...♖d8 the simplest is 26 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 27 ♖f1 when Black cannot defend the f7-square.

**26 ♕h6+ ♔e7**
**27 ♕f6+ ♔f8**
**28 g6 ♗h6**

The only defence to the threat of 29 g7 mate.

**29 ♖f1!**

Here White was worried by problems of an aesthetic nature. 29 ♘c5 was perhaps more spectacular, with the main variation 29...♗g7 30 ♘d7+ ♕xd7 31 ♖xd7 ♗xf6 32 ♖xf7 mate. However, if White's aim is to give mate in the least number of moves, then 29 ♘c5 is definitely a false trail, since after 29...♕f4 he is 'forced' to play 30 g7+ and 31 ♕xf4. After the text, however, mate is inevitable. On 29...♖d8 there follows 30 ♕h8+ ♔e7 31 ♖xf7+ ♔d6 32 ♕d4+ ♔c6 33 ♕c5 mate.

**1-0**

Game 93

**Westerinen – Tal**

*Tallinn 1973*

Sicilian Defence

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **e4** | **c5** |
| **2** | **♘f3** | **e6** |
| **3** | **b3** | |

The Finnish master adopts this move fairly often; indeed, two years ago here in Tallinn, he defeated L. Stein in this variation. Looking through some chess magazines literally half an hour before the start of the game, I came across the game Westerinen-Kaplan, Skopje 1972, which White had lost in 20 moves, and without checking any further I decided to follow the Puerto-Rican.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **3** | **...** | **♘f6** |
| **4** | **e5** | **♘d5** |
| **5** | **♗b2** | **♗e7** |
| **6** | **c4** | **♘c7** |

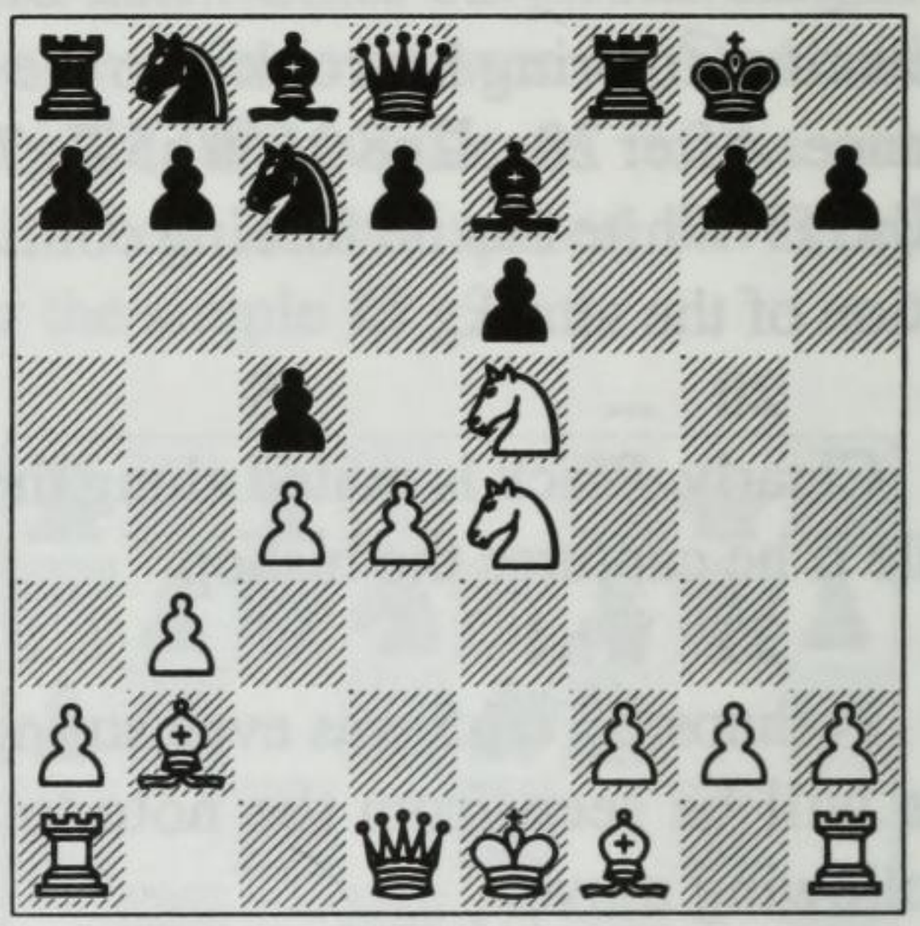
Of course, the normal continuation is 6...♘b4, but after all, Kaplan had won quickly...

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **7** | **♘c3** | **f6** |
| **8** | **♘e4** | **fxe5** |
| **9** | **♘xe5** | **0-0** |

At Skopje in this position Westerinen continued 10 ♕g4?, and after 10...♘e8 Black quickly seized the initiative, as within two moves (11...d6 and 12...e5) the activity of the bishop on b2 was curtailed. Of course, it was extremely naïve to expect that the Finnish master would repeat the game to the end.

**10 d4** *(D)*

*B*



It turns out that White has a certain advantage on his side. On 10...d6 there could follow 11 ♘f3 cxd4 12 ♕xd4 e5 13 ♕e3, and his pressure along the d-file gives White excellent prospects.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **10** | **...** | **cxd4** |
| **11** | **♕xd4** | **♗b4+** |
| **12** | **♔d1** | |

Westerinen is a player with a very active style, and he is not satisfied by

the continuation 12 ♗c3 ♘c6 13 ♘xc6 ♗xc3+ 14 ♕xc3 bxc6, which only gives him a slight positional advantage. White's desire to keep his bishop also has a positional basis, but Westerinen's technical solution of the problem is inaccurate. Much more dangerous for Black was 12 ♔e2. The difference becomes noticeable immediately.

**12 ... d6!**

It is surprising, but apparently this simple move escaped Westerinen's attention. It turns out that after 13 ♘c6 e5 White loses a piece. If White's king was on e2, then possible would be 13 a3 dxe5 (there is no other move) 14 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 15 axb4 ♘c6, with an unclear ending. Incidentally, in this variation 14 ♕xe5 is also worth considering.

**13 ♘d3 e5**

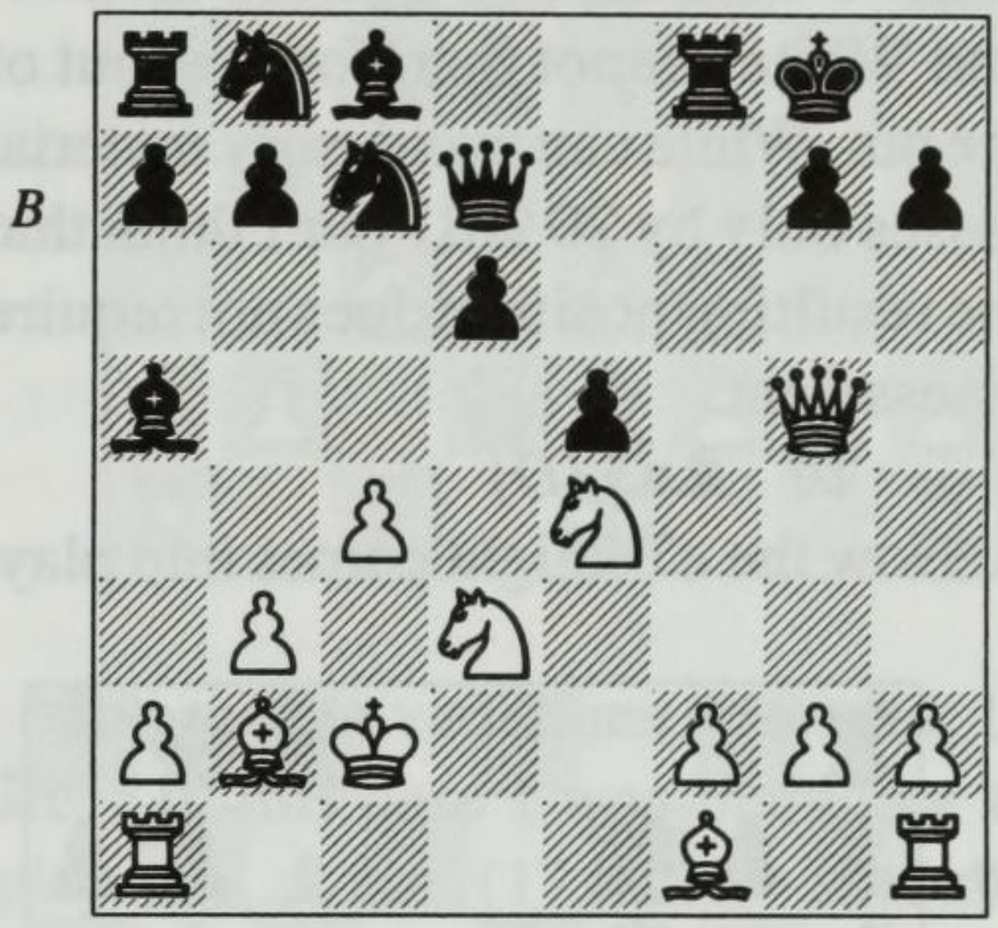
**14 ♕e3 ♗a5!**

Yet another distinction. In this variation also, White's king would be better placed on e2, since he would then have the move ♖d1. The position of the king on the d-file caused Black to consider the immediate 14...d5, but I decided that after 15 ♘xb4 dxe4+ 16 ♔c2 White would succeed in completing his development. The modest move in the game is considerably more unpleasant as now the threat of the advance of the central pawn must be taken seriously.

**15 ♕g5 ♕d7!**

Of course, the exchange of queens would also have given Black a certain advantage, but the queen is not badly placed on d7.

**16 ♔c2** *(D)*



**16 ... ♕c6!**

Black spent quite a considerable time examining the immediate 16...b5 and sharp variations such as 17 ♖d1 bxc4 18 ♘xe5 ♕f5 19 ♗xc4+ d5 20 ♖xd5 etc, but then I noticed the apparently awkward queen move, which, as becomes clear, leads to a big, and perhaps decisive, advantage. Black straight away develops his pieces with gain of time, while c6 is not the only post for his knight.

**17 f3**

It is easy to see that White gains nothing by 17 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 18 ♗xe5 ♕d7.

**17 ... ♗f5**

**18 ♘g3**

Perhaps more tenacious was 18 ♗e2 to which Black would have replied 18...♘ba6.

**18 ... ♗g6**

Not, of course, 18...♘e6 19 ♘xf5.

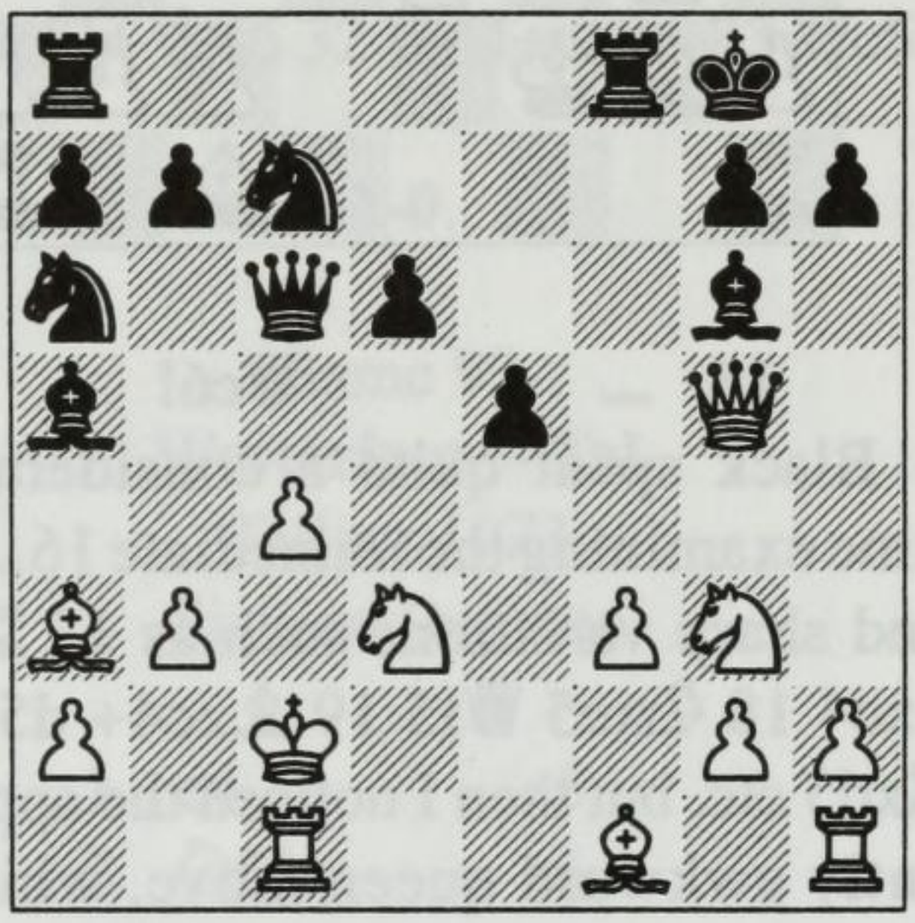
**19 ♖c1 ♘ba6**

Threatening a deadly check on b4. On 20 a3, 20...♘c5 decides, as 21 b4 fails to 21...♘xd3 22 ♗xd3 ♕xc4+, and White cannot therefore get out of the pin. White can avoid early material losses only by 20 ♔d1 but I think that the resulting position does not require assessment.

**20 ♗a3** *(D)*

Now the c7-knight comes into play.

*B*



**20 ... ♘b5**
**21 ♔b2 ♘xa3**
**22 ♕e3**

After 22 ♔xa3 Black wins immediately by 22...♗xd3 23 ♗xd3 ♕c5+ 24 ♔b2 ♕d4+.

**22 ... ♘b4**

This is swifter than the prosaic 22...♗xd3 and 23...♗b4.

**23 ♔xa3 ♗xd3**
**24 ♗xd3 ♕a6**
**0-1**

There is no defence against the retreat of the bishop (with or without check).

Game 94
**Spassky – Tal**
*Tallinn 1973*
Nimzo-Indian Defence

**1 d4 ♘f6**
**2 c4 e6**
**3 ♘c3**

I took this move to be the first signal of Spassky's aggressive intentions. When he is more peaceably inclined he plays 3 ♘f3, after which the comparatively quiet Queen's Indian Defence is normally reached.

**3 ... ♗b4**
**4 ♗g5**

The gauntlet is thrown down. The Leningrad Variation, which Spassky frequently adopts, usually leads to a complicated and sharp struggle.

**4 ... h6**
**5 ♗h4 c5**
**6 d5 b5**

The challenge is accepted. This sharp continuation seems to me to be the most logical, although Black has other, quieter moves at his disposal, e.g. 6...d6, 6...e5 or 6...♗xc3+. The move 6...b5 is akin to the Volga Gambit, which is frequently adopted at present.

**7 dxe6**

7 e4 g5 8 ♗g3 ♘xe4 9 ♗e5, which occurred in the game Levenfish-Estrin, USSR Championship Semi-final 1951, leads to very sharp play. Spassky prefers to accept the pawn sacrifice.

**7 ... fxe6**

**8 cxb5 d5**

Now Black has a mobile pawn centre.

**9 e3 0-0**

**10 ♘f3**

Better perhaps was 10 ♗d3 d4 11 exd4 cxd4 12 a3 or else 10 a3 immediately.

**10 ... ♕a5**

**11 ♗xf6**

This exchange is forced in view of the threatened 11...♘e4.

**11 ... ♖xf6**

**12 ♕d2**

12 ♕c1 is more accurate, since, with the queen's rook defended, Black's bishop will be immediately attacked after a subsequent a3. True, on 12 ♕c1 Black has the reply 12...c4.

**12 ... a6**

**13 bxa6**

A risky move. 13 b6 or 13 ♗e2 axb5 14 0-0 would have been more prudent.

**13 ... ♘c6**

Black does not recapture on a6, of course, but reinforces the threat of ...d4.

**14 ♗e2** *(D)*

Here again 14 ♕c1 deserved consideration, so as on 14...d4 to play 15 a3 ♗xc3+ 16 bxc3. In this case White would not have been in any immediate danger.

**14 ... d4**

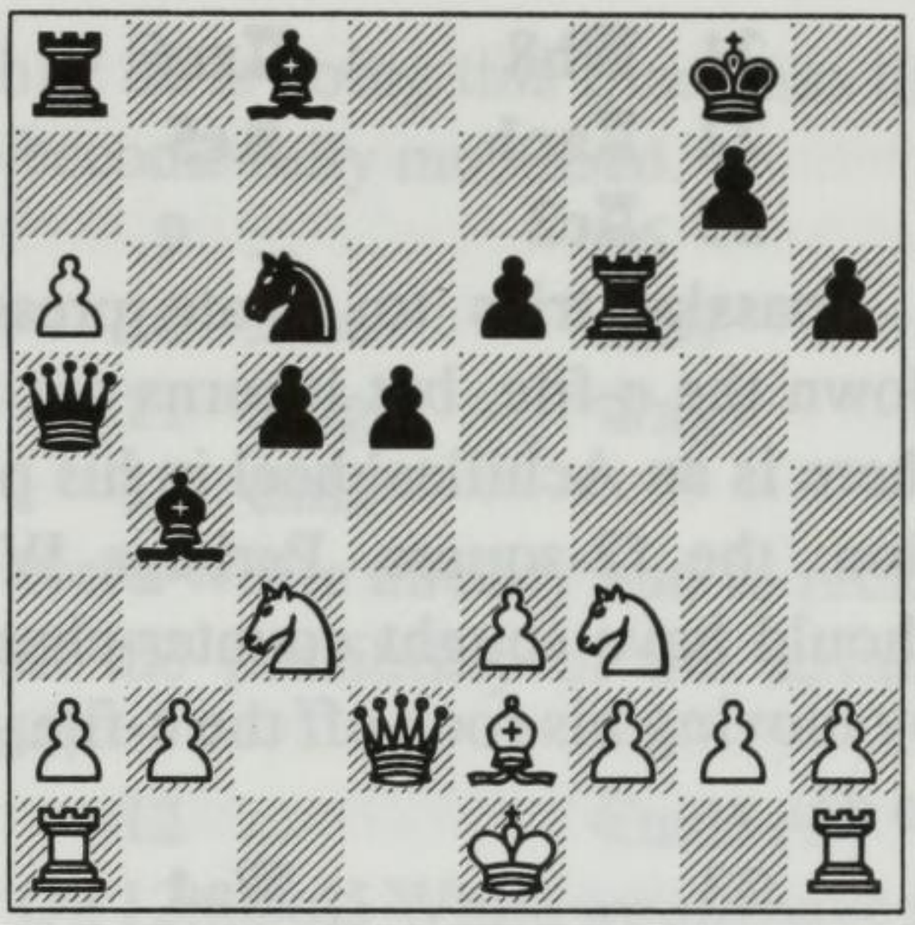
**15 exd4 ♖xf3**

This combination leads by force to an advantage for Black.

**16 ♗xf3 cxd4**

**17 0-0**

*B*



Interesting variations arise after 17 ♖c1. In this case I was intending to play 17...♗xa6 (17...dxc3 18 bxc3 does not promise anything) 18 ♗xc6 ♖d8 and Black should win, e.g. 19 ♕c2 dxc3 20 bxc3 ♕e5+ 21 ♗e4. Here 21...♗d3 wins easily, but at the board I worked out the following variation, which appealed to me: 21...♗xc3+ 22 ♕xc3 ♕xe4+ 23 ♕e3 ♕xg2 24 ♕xe6+ (the only move) 24...♔h8 25 ♕c6 ♕xc6 26 ♖xc6 ♗b7! and Black wins a rook, while if White should try to give it up as dearly as possible, then after 27 ♖xh6+ gxh6 he is mated: 28 0-0 ♖g8 mate, or 28 ♖g1 ♗f3 and then 29...♖d1 mate.

**17 ... dxc3**

**18 bxc3 ♗xc3**

**19 ♕d6 ♖xa6**

19...♗xa1 fails to 20 ♕xc6.

**20 ♗xc6**

If White moves his queen's rook, then Black replies 20...♘d4.

**20 ... ♗b4**

The concluding move of the combination. White loses his bishop.

**21 ♕b8 ♖xc6**
**22 ♖ac1 ♗c5**
**23 ♖c2**

Spassky tries to create pressure down the c-file, but it turns out that there is an Achilles' heel in his position: the f2-square. Perhaps White should have sought counter-chances by moving his rook off the c-file, e.g. to d1.

**23 ... ♕a4**
**24 ♕b3**

24 ♖fc1 would have lost against 24...♗xf2+.

**24 ... ♕f4**

At this point I considered two moves, 24...♕e4 and 24...♕f4. I rejected 24...♕e4 because of the following variations: 25 ♖fc1 ♗b7 26 ♕xb7 ♗xf2+ 27 ♔f1 (not 27 ♔h1? ♖xc2) 27...♕d3+ 28 ♔xf2 ♖xc2+ 29 ♖xc2 ♕xc2+ and it is clear that the queen ending reached with an extra pawn for Black is a very small achievement. Therefore I made the choice of 24...♕f4. Now, on 25 ♕b5 I was intending to reply 25...♕d6 and if 26 ♖fc1, then 26...♗a6, when White cannot play 27 ♕a5 ♗xf2+.

**25 ♕g3**

25 ♕f3 was better, when Black would not have exchanged queens, but would have kept his advantage by 25...♕d6 or 25...♕c7.

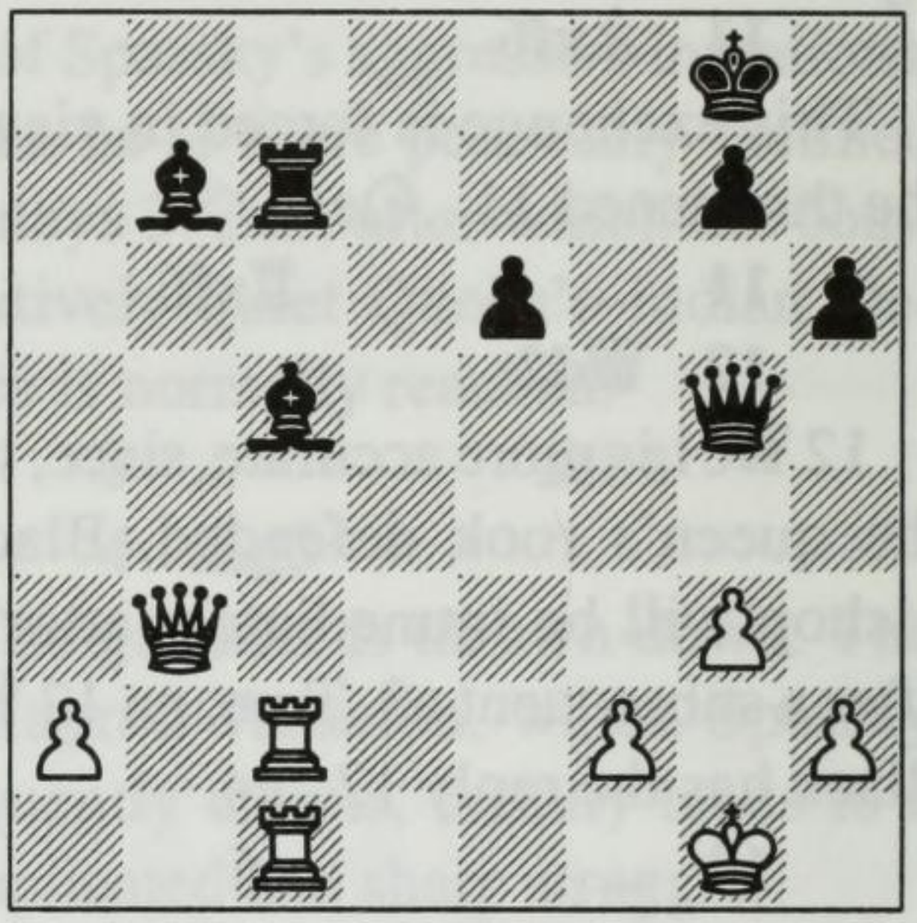
**25 ... ♕f5**
**26 ♖fc1 ♗b7**
**27 ♕f3**

Not 27 ♕b8+ ♔h7 28 ♕xb7 because of 28...♗xf2+.

**27 ... ♕g5**
**28 ♕b3**

On 28 ♕g3 the blow at f2 is once again decisive: 28...♗xf2+ 29 ♕xf2 ♕xc1+ or 29 ♔xf2 ♖xc2+ 30 ♖xc2 ♕f5+.

**28 ... ♖c7**
**29 g3** *(D)*



*B*

**29 ... ♗xf2+**
**30 ♔xf2 ♕f6+**

I made this move in accordance with my preliminary calculations. 30...♕f5+ 31 ♔g1 ♕e4 would have reached the goal more quickly.

**31 ♔e1 ♕e5+**
**32 ♔f1 ♗a6+**
**33 ♔g1 ♕d4+**
**34 ♔g2 ♕e4+**
**35 ♔g1**

If 35 ♔h3 then 35...♖xc2 followed by 36...♗f1+.

**35 ... ♗b7**
**36 h4 ♕h1+**
**37 ♔f2 ♖f7+**
**38 ♔e2 ♕e4+**

**0-1**

Game 95

**Larsen – Tal**

*Leningrad Interzonal, 1973*

English Opening

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **c4** | **g6** |
| **2** | **♘c3** | **♗g7** |
| **3** | **♘f3** | **c5** |

Since White, by avoiding the advance of his d-pawn, has not insisted on the King's Indian Defence, the game now goes into one of the popular systems of the English Opening. The theoretical opinion, that Black obtains a comfortable position, has been confirmed on numerous occasions. The one drawback to the system was disclosed by Taimanov in my game with him a few rounds earlier. If White wants to draw, then he can. But against a player like Larsen, one doesn't have to worry about such 'aggressive peacefulness'.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **4** | **g3** | **♘c6** |
| **5** | **♗g2** | **e6** |
| **6** | **0-0** | **♘ge7** |
| **7** | **d3** | |

The supposition is proved correct; the Danish grandmaster avoids a symmetrical pawn set-up in the centre.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **7** | **...** | **0-0** |
| **8** | **♗d2** | **d5** |
| **9** | **♕c1** | |

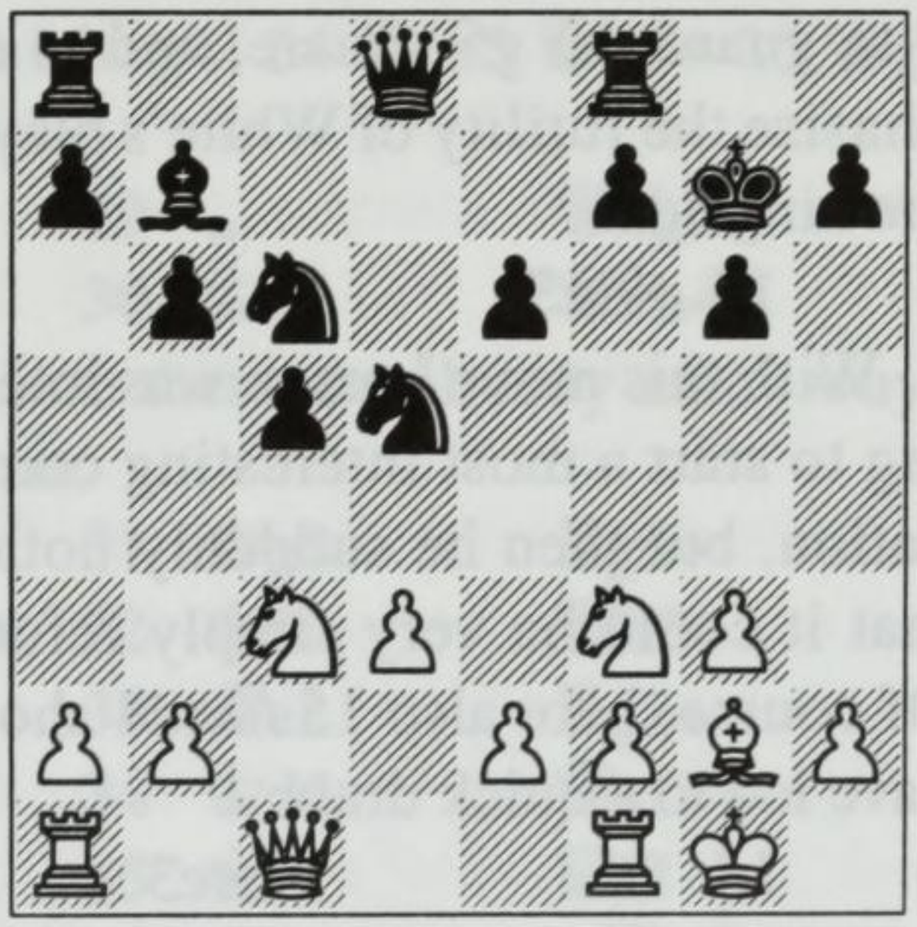
As the Petrosian-Fischer game from the 'Match of the Century' showed, immediate operations on the queenside similarly do not promise White a great deal. Larsen aims to exchange off the dark-squared bishops, but while he is doing this Black has time to become fully mobilised.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **9** | **...** | **b6** |
| **10** | **♗h6** | **♗b7** |
| **11** | **♗xg7** | **♔xg7** |
| **12** | **cxd5** | |

Here White already had to reckon with the possibility of the advance ...d4.

**12 ... ♘xd5** *(D)*

On 12...exd5 White would have the favourable reply 13 d4. The placing of the black pieces is far from ideal for play with an isolated d-pawn.



The position is roughly equal. White could play 13 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 14 ♕c3+ ♔g8 15 ♖fe1 (but not 15 ♘d2 or 15 ♘e5 in view of 15...♘d4!). A more complicated game results from 15 a3. The move chosen by Larsen also should not have lost, although it is by no means the strongest.

**13 h4**

I remember that several years ago Polugaevsky wrote about the fact that the Danish Grandmaster was far from

indifferent to advancing his rooks' pawns. In the present position White does not succeed in exploiting the absence of the black bishop from g7, while the weaknesses on his kingside may with time become noticeable.

**13 ... ♘d4**
**14 ♖e1**

It would have been simpler to relieve the situation by the exchange of all the minor pieces.

**14 ... h6**

Although I hadn't realised it, this move sets a trap into which my opponent falls. The initial idea was simple – to guard the g5-square, and to emphasise the futility of White's play on the kingside.

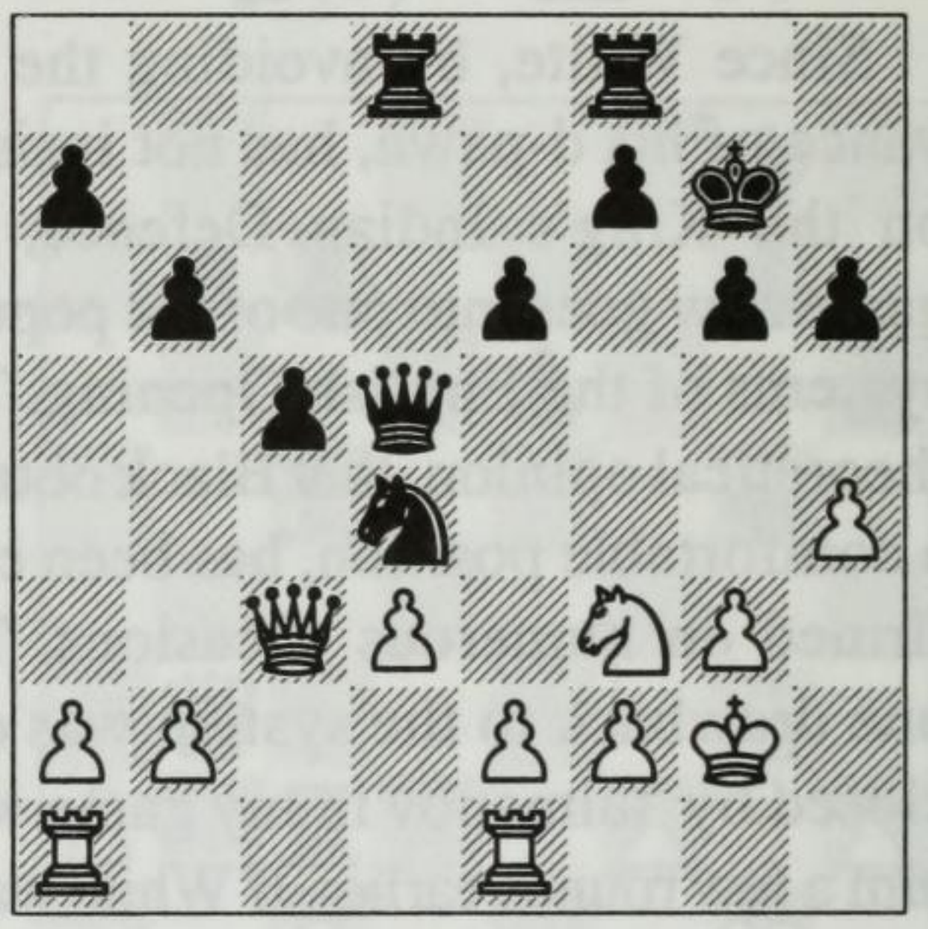
**15 ♘e5**

With this move Larsen was intending to start a most interesting combination, but then he suddenly noticed that it could be very simply refuted. Of course, here also 15 ♘xd4 should have led to a quick draw.

**15 ... ♘xc3**
**16 ♕xc3**

At first White had planned 16 bxc3 ♗xg2 17 ♘g4 (17 cxd4 ♕xd4! simply leaves Black a pawn up), preparing, in answer to 17...♘xe2+ 18 ♖xe2 ♗f3 19 ♕xh6+ ♔g8, the spectacular 20 h5!! (20 ♖xe6 leads only to a draw) 20...♗xe2 21 hxg6 fxg6 22 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 23 ♕h6+ ♔g8 24 ♕xe6+ obtaining two pawns for the exchange and with the black king in an exposed position. Alas, the whole variation does not work because of the reply 17...h5 when once again White remains a pawn down. Therefore he had to agree to the loss of two tempi, which naturally gives Black a certain advantage.

**16 ... ♗xg2**
**17 ♔xg2 ♕d5+**
**18 ♘f3 ♖ad8!** *(D)*




On this occasion Black solves correctly that eternal problem of how best to place the rooks. The queen's rook stands on the d-file, preventing 19 e4 followed by the capture of the knight, since in this case the rook ending will be hopeless for White. As, in all probability, White will be sooner or later forced to exchange on d4, Black's king's rook will come into play along the then open e-file.

**19 ♔g1 e5**
**20 ♘xd4**

After 20 ♘d2 the drawbacks to White's 13th move could have been exposed by 20...g5.

**20 ... exd4**
**21 ♕c4 ♕h5**
**22 ♕a4**

White is over-optimistic. In my opinion, he had to advance his e-pawn in order to defend against the threatened attack. The capture of the a-pawn consumes too much time.

**22 ... ♖fe8**
**23 ♕xa7 ♖d6**

Not so much to defend the b-pawn as to attack the f-pawn.

**24 b4 ♖f6!**

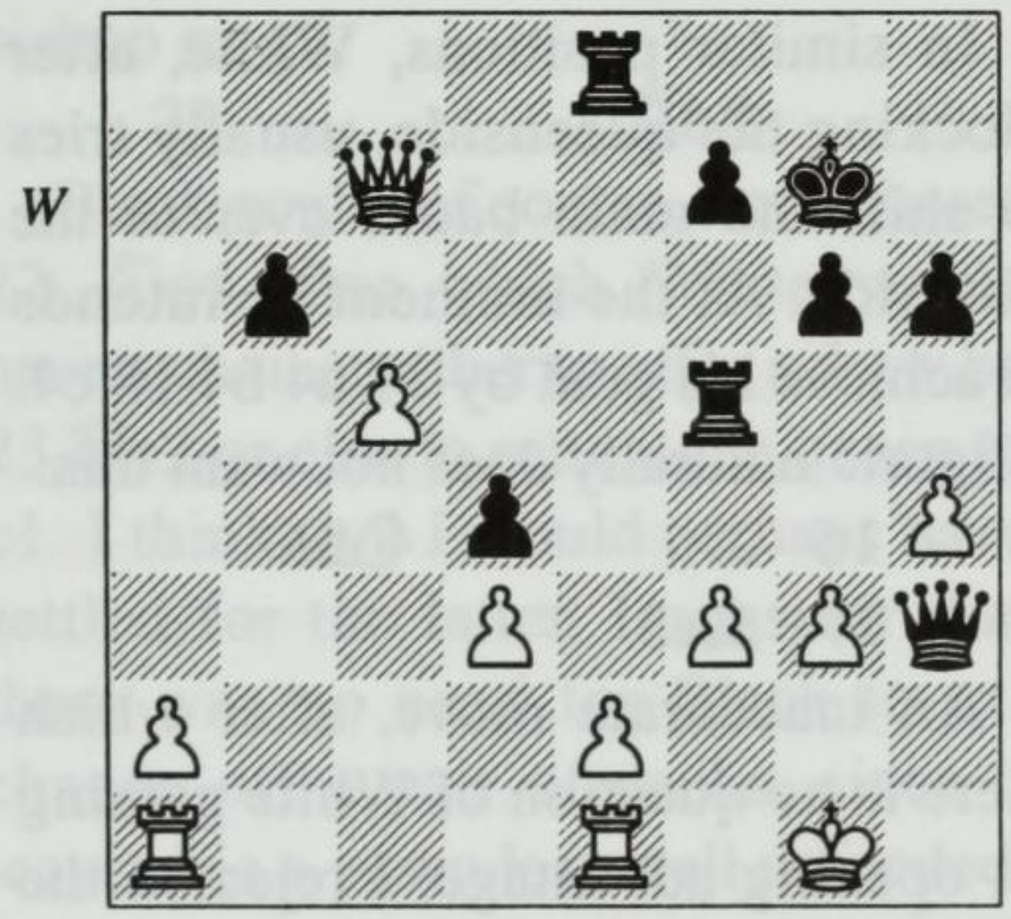
24...cxb4 was also good, but the position is already ripe for a forced variation.

**25 bxc5 ♕f5!**

This forces a serious weakening, as 26 ♖f1 loses immediately to 26...♖xe2.

**26 f3 ♕h3**
**27 ♕c7 ♖f5!** *(D)*

A quiet move with an irresistible threat. Once one of the black rooks reaches e5 the white king will be absolutely defenceless.



**28 cxb6 ♖fe5**

This is simpler than 28...♖ee5 29 g4 ♕g3+ 30 ♔h1 (30 ♔f1 ♖xf3+) 30...♖h5! which also wins.

**29 e4**

In planning his attack, Black considered the main variation to be the following: 29 ♕xe5+ ♖xe5 30 g4, hoping with rook against queen to exploit the strength of the b-pawn. In this case I was planning 30...♕g3+ 31 ♔h1 (after 31 ♔f1 ♕h2! White can undertake nothing, since on 32 b7 there follows 32...♖b5 and he cannot play a rook to b1, while in reply to 32 a4 the simplest solution is 32...♖xe2 33 ♖xe2 ♕h1+ 34 ♔f2 ♕xa1 and both pawns will fall in the not too distant future) 31...h5! 32 b7 ♖b5 33 ♖eb1 hxg4! 34 ♖xb5 ♕h3+ 35 ♔g1 g3.

**29 ... ♕xg3+**
**30 ♔h1 ♕xh4+**

Here there are already many ways to win.

**31 ♔g2 ♖g5+**
**32 ♔f1 ♕h3+**
**33 ♔e2 ♖g2+**
**34 ♔d1 ♕xf3+**
**35 ♔c1 ♕f2**

**0-1**

## Game 96
## **Tal – Gligorić**
*Leningrad Interzonal, 1973*
Ruy Lopez

**1 e4 e5**
**2 ♘f3 ♘c6**
**3 ♗b5 a6**
**4 ♗a4 ♘f6**
**5 0-0 ♗e7**
**6 ♖e1 b5**

**7 ♗b3 d6**
**8 c3 0-0**
**9 h3 ♘b8**

The leading Yugoslav Grandmaster is distinguished, I would say, by the 'seasonal constancy' of his play with Black. About ten years ago he only played the system with 9...♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 11 d4 ♘d7. Then came the turn of the Smyslov system 9...h6, to which Gligorić remained faithful for a long time, despite occasional setbacks. Since 1972, he, like many others, has been adopting the Breyer system. The Leningrad Tournament was, if I am not mistaken, the fourth event in a row in which Gligorić played this variation (true, in his own interpretation).

**10 d4 ♘bd7**
**11 ♘bd2 ♗b7**
**12 ♗c2 c5**

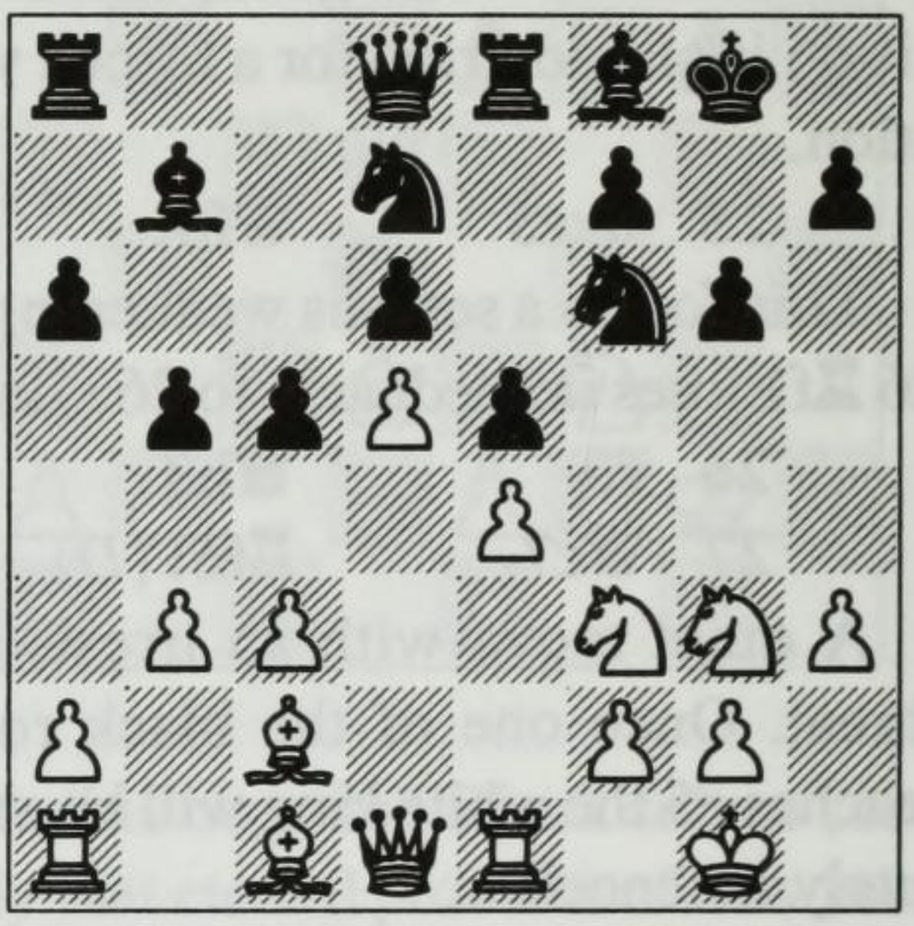
The usual continuation is 12...♖e8, as Kuzmin played against Rukavina in the same round. True, White has recently carried out with fair success a plan involving the advance of his queenside pawns; Black's last move is directed against this.

**13 ♘f1 ♖e8**
**14 ♘g3 ♗f8!**

Gligorić closely studies his previous games, and constantly perfects the systems he adopts. This was especially brought home to me during our match in 1968, in which he succeeded in obtaining a comfortable game as Black. The present game is no exception. The Yugoslav grandmaster improves on the game Keres-Gligorić (San Antonio, 1972), in which after 14...g6 15 ♗h6! ♗f8 16 ♕d2 White created strong pressure. For the moment White's queen's bishop has no convenient post (15 ♗g5 is answered by the simple 15...h6), while in some cases Black is ready to play ...d5. Hence the decision to block the centre.

**15 d5 g6**
**16 b3** *(D)*

*B*



In similar positions, White, after blocking the queenside, usually tries to shift the main battle over to the kingside. At the moment he intends to achieve his goal by 17 a4 b4 18 c4. Gligorić naturally does not want this.

**16 ... ♘b6**
**17 ♗e3**

An inaccurate move, after which there is no question of White gaining on opening advantage. I rejected the immediate 17 a4 because of 17...bxa4 18 bxa4 ♘c4. This was all the more reason for not playing the bishop to e3, where it makes the opponent a present of a tempo. In making this last

move, White was planning to advance instead his b-pawn, but then thought better of it. After the stronger 17 ♕e2, I consider that White would have the better chances.

**17 ... ♗c8**

**18 a4**

A confession that the previous move was a mistake.

**18 ... bxa4**

**19 bxa4 ♘c4**

**20 ♗g5 ♗g7**

Avoiding the tactical possibility 20...h6 21 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 22 a5! when the knight is threatened.

**21 ♕e2**

In making this move, White did not yet know whether he would be aggressively inclined (cf. the note to Black's 22nd move).

**21 ... ♘a5**

**22 ♕d2**

Now White likes the position of his bishop on g5.

**22 ... ♖b8**

Black could, of course, have played 22...♘c4 after which White would have a choice: either to offer a draw by 23 ♕e2 or else to retreat the queen to c1. I think that I would perhaps have settled for the latter. I consider that there was no need for Black to exchange off a pair of rooks, since it leaves his a-pawn less well defended. Stronger was the immediate 22...♗d7, or the manoeuvre 22...♕e7 followed by ...♕f8 and ...h6.

**23 ♖eb1 ♖xb1+**

**24 ♖xb1 ♗d7**

This is a tactical error, after which White gains the advantage. Black shouldn't have left his a-pawn completely undefended; instead 24...♖e7 would have left the game roughly equal.

**25 c4!**

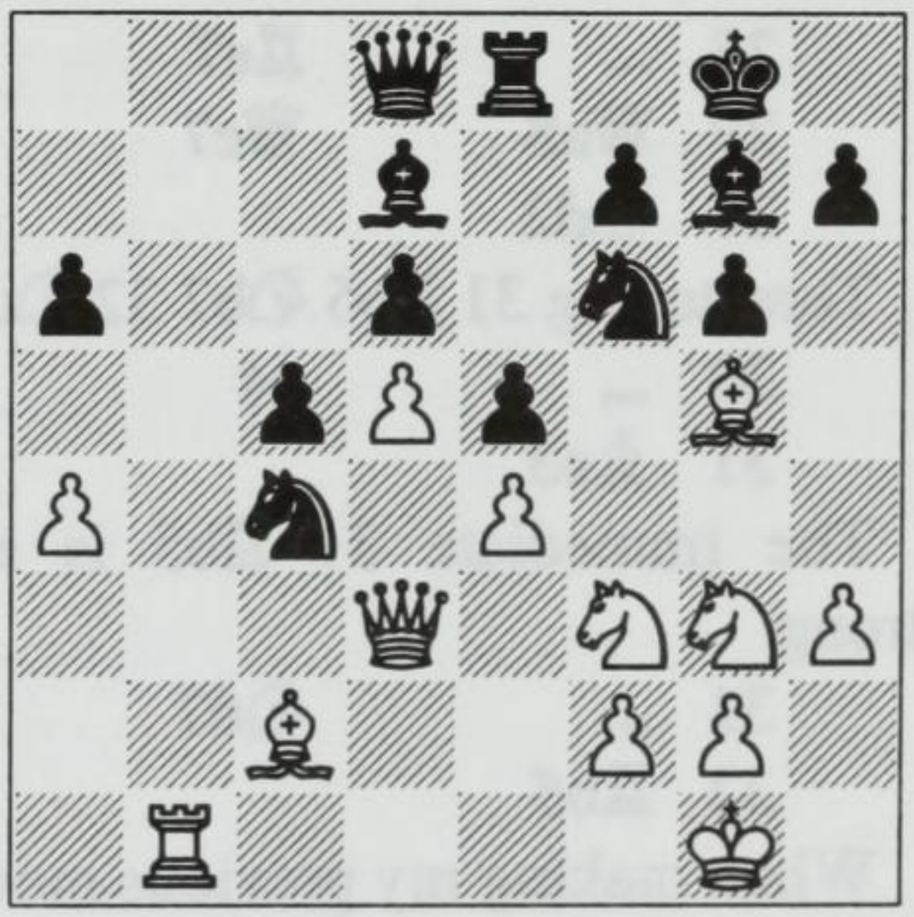
Black must capture this pawn, otherwise after 26 ♕c3 and 27 ♗d2 his position will be very difficult. Evidently Gligorić must have underestimated White's next move, otherwise he would have certainly continued 25...h6, although in this case, after 26 ♗xf6 (stronger than 26 ♗xh6 ♘xc4) 26...♗xf6 27 ♕xh6 ♘xc4 28 ♗d3 White also has the initiative.

**25 ... ♘xc4**

**26 ♕d3!** *(D)*

This is much stronger than 26 ♕c3 ♘b6 27 ♕a5 ♘c4! (but not 27...♘xa4 28 ♕xa6 when the knight is doomed).

*B*



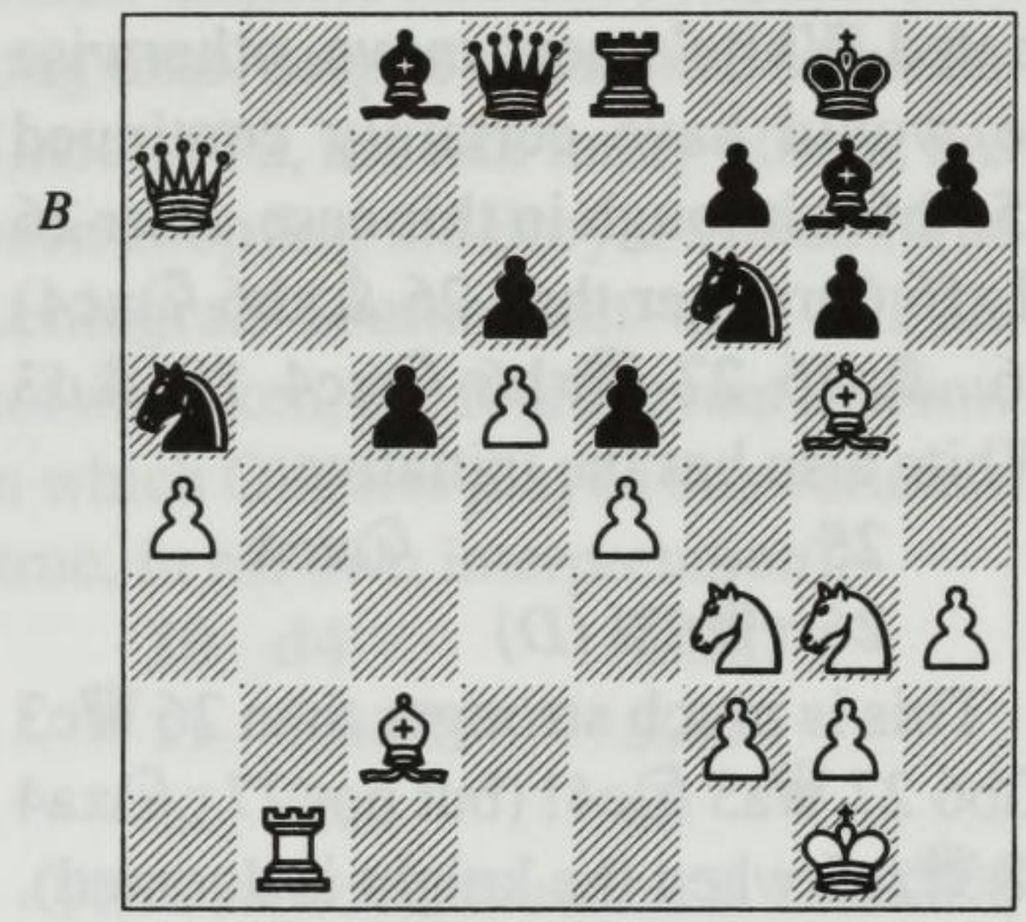
**26 ... ♘a5**

26...♘b6 27 ♕xa6 ♘c8 28 a5 is also bad.

**27 ♕xa6 ♗c8**

**28 ♕a7!** *(D)*

The most convincing method. Supported from in front by the queen, who feels quite at home among the enemy pieces, and from the rear by two or three important enough pieces, the passed pawn will soon begin its inexorable advance. Black's badly placed pieces are unable to set up even the slightest bit of counterplay.



**28 ... ♖e7**
**29 ♕a8 ♕c7**
**30 ♘d2**

Threatening 31 ♖b5 ♘b7 32 ♘c4.

**30 ... c4**
**31 ♗e3**

The immediate 31 ♖b5 is also strong.

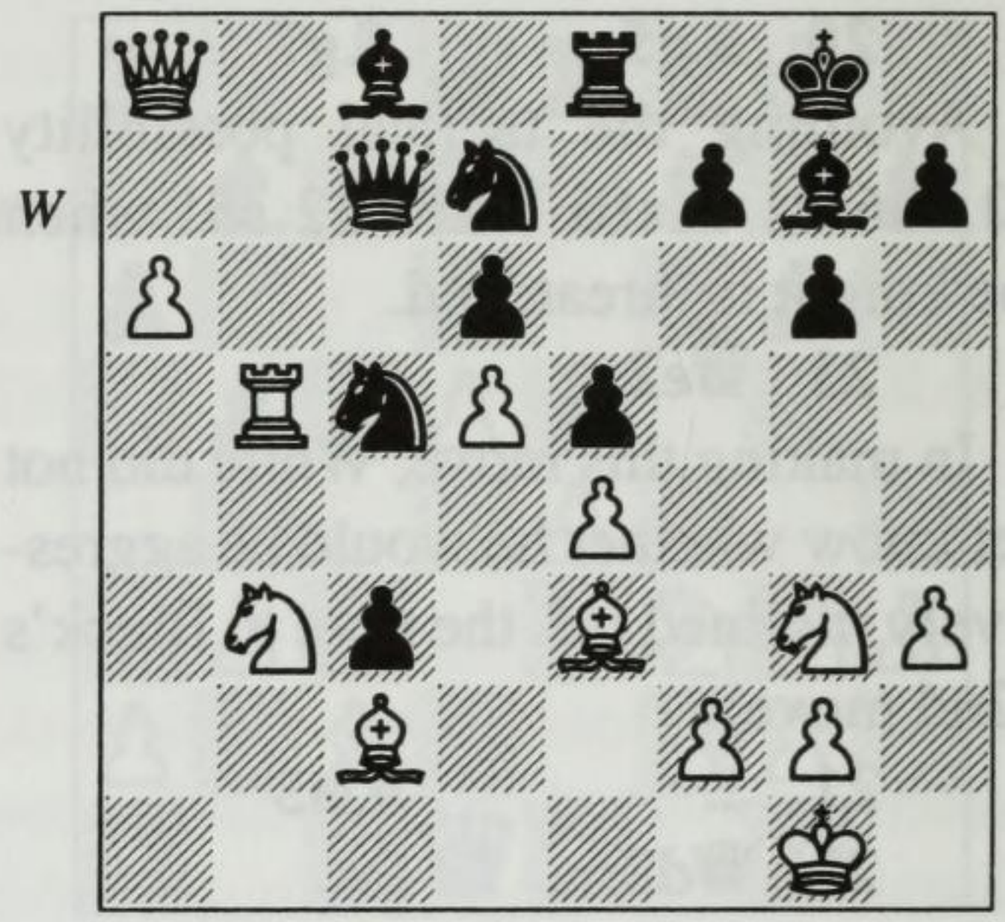
**31 ... ♘d7**
**32 ♖b5**

When making my previous move I had intended to play 32 ♗b6 but then decided that it was not worth parting with my bishop just to win a pawn after 32...♘xb6 33 ♕xa5 c3! 34 ♘f3 ♘c4.

**32 ... ♘b7**

It is possible that 32...c3 would have enabled Black to put up a longer resistance, although White's extra pawn, together with all his positional advantages, should have ensured him an easy win.

**33 a5 c3**
**34 ♘b3 ♖e8**
**35 a6 ♘bc5** *(D)*



**36 a7??**

Phenomenal! White wrote down on his scoresheet the (not exactly difficult) move 36 ♘xc5 which finishes the game instantly, and after which my opponent was indeed going to resign, since the a-pawn reaches the eighth rank by force. Then White decided that the exchange on c5 was an unnecessary move, and completely forgot about his opponent's reply.

**36 ... ♘b7**

The funniest thing is that White's 36th move was objectively just as good as the one I had written down, since here also White could have won

immediately, though this time with the help of a combination – 37 ♖b6! I saw this combination, but having overlooked my opponent's previous move, I completely lost confidence in myself, and stopped at the position after 37...♘xb6 38 ♕b8 (but not 38 ♗xb6 ♕xb6 39 ♕b8 ♗d7) 38...♘a8. Yet after 39 ♕xa8 it is time for Black to resign, since he comes out a piece down. However, I was not after a brilliancy, and in my confused state took what was perhaps the most practical decision – to make a few quiet moves, seeing that White's position is so strong, and adjourn the game.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **37** | **♘e2** | **♖f8** |
| **38** | **♘ec1** | **f5** |
| **39** | **f3** | **♗f6** |

Black should definitely not have given up the pawn. After 39...fxe4 the analysis of the adjourned position would have been by no means a formality.

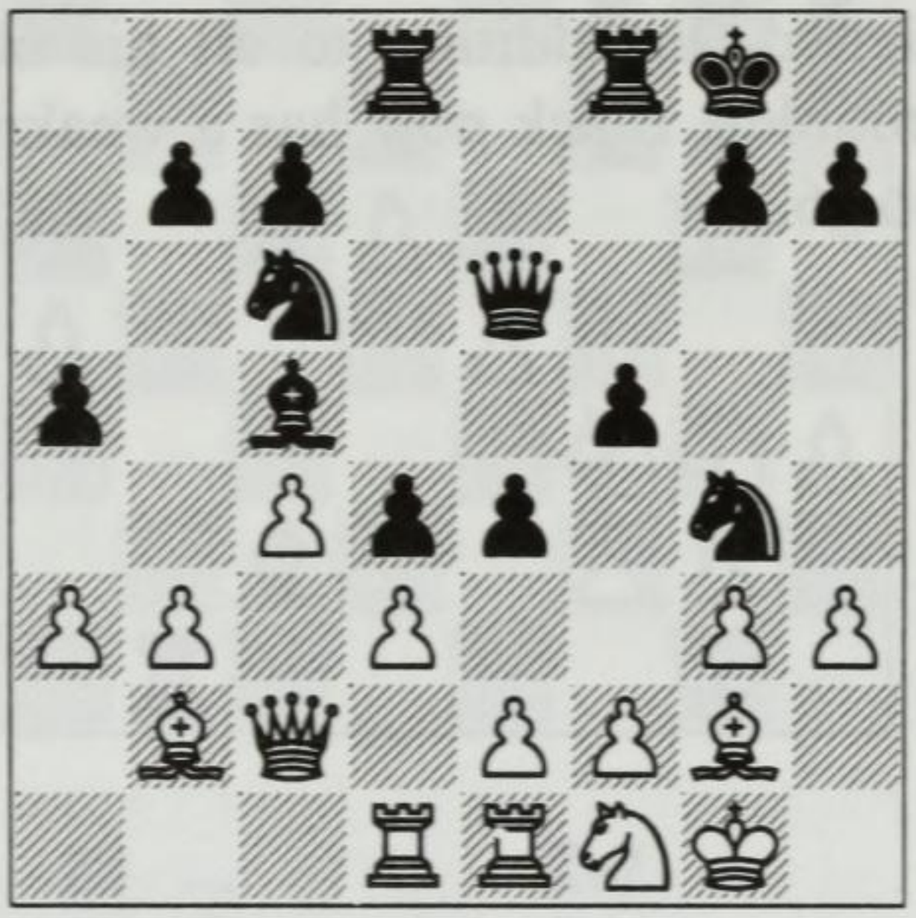
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **40** | **exf5** | **♔g7** |
| **41** | **fxg6** | **hxg6** |
| **42** | **♘d3** | **1-0** |

Here the game was adjourned, but on the following day Gligorić resigned. In addition to all his other troubles, Black now has a weakness on g6.

# 9 Recent Events

The 'shadow of Leningrad' continued to dog me, and although I managed to get through the traditional Chigorin Memorial Tournament in Sochi without defeat, and take first place there, I could be satisfied with my play only very relatively. Several times I obtained attacking positions (against Andersson, for instance, and against Hennings), but then for some reason I began to hurry things, and thus threw away my advantage.

The same happened in the following game, which was widely reported in the press, although I did manage to win it.



**Filip – Tal**
*Sochi, 1973*

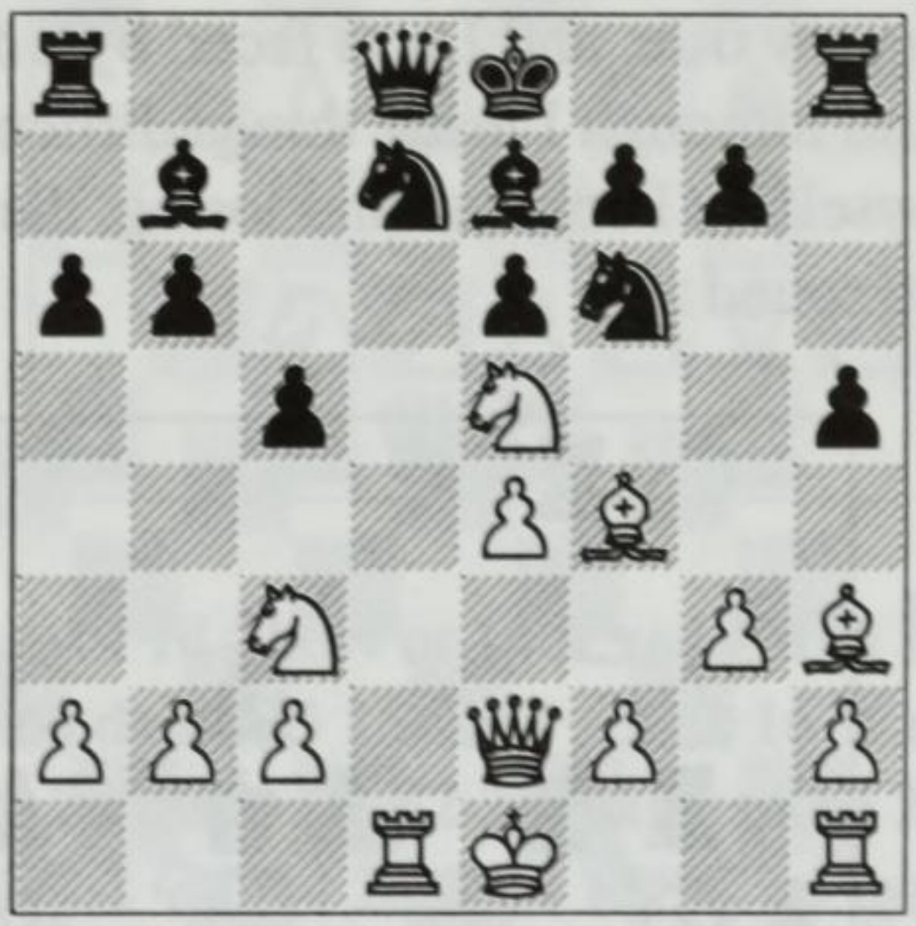
**19...e3 20 hxg4 f4 21 ♗d5 ♖xd5 22 cxd5 exf2+ 23 ♔xf2 fxg3+ 24 ♔g1 ♕xg4 25 dxc6 ♕h3 26 e4 ♖f2 27 ♕xf2 gxf2+ 28 ♔xf2 bxc6 29 ♖e2 ♕h4+ 30 ♘g3 ♗d6 31 e5 ♗xe5 32 ♖g1 g6 33 ♖e4 ♕h2+ 34 ♖g2 ♗xg3+ 35 ♔f3 ♕h3 36 ♖xg3 ♕f1+ 37 ♔g4 ♕f5+ 0-1**

A little later, during the Premier League of the USSR Championship, I was reproached for the fact that fatigue after the tournament in Sochi was telling on my play. This is hardly justified. Of course, the consequence of my failure in the Interzonal was still having its effect, but even so I played better in the Championship in Moscow than I had in Sochi. It was more likely that I was affected by the cold that I caught at the very start of the event, which led to my games from the second and third rounds being postponed. By the way, for my relatively quick recovery, I am completely indebted to my wife, who was partially filling the role of my second.

Let us return to the Championship. I recall my game with Polugaevsky, which was an exact reflection of the fourth game of my match with Larsen. After correctly sacrificing a pawn, I thought for 50 minutes over a tempting piece sacrifice, each minute becoming more and more convinced that it would not work. When everything was quite clear, I suddenly became angry with myself for wasting such a lot of time and ... sacrificed! With a few moves, which I had foreseen quite clearly, Polugaevsky repulsed the attack, and it was all over.

My subsequent play was rather nervy. There were wins, while good opportunities were lost, but it was the following game that was the last straw.

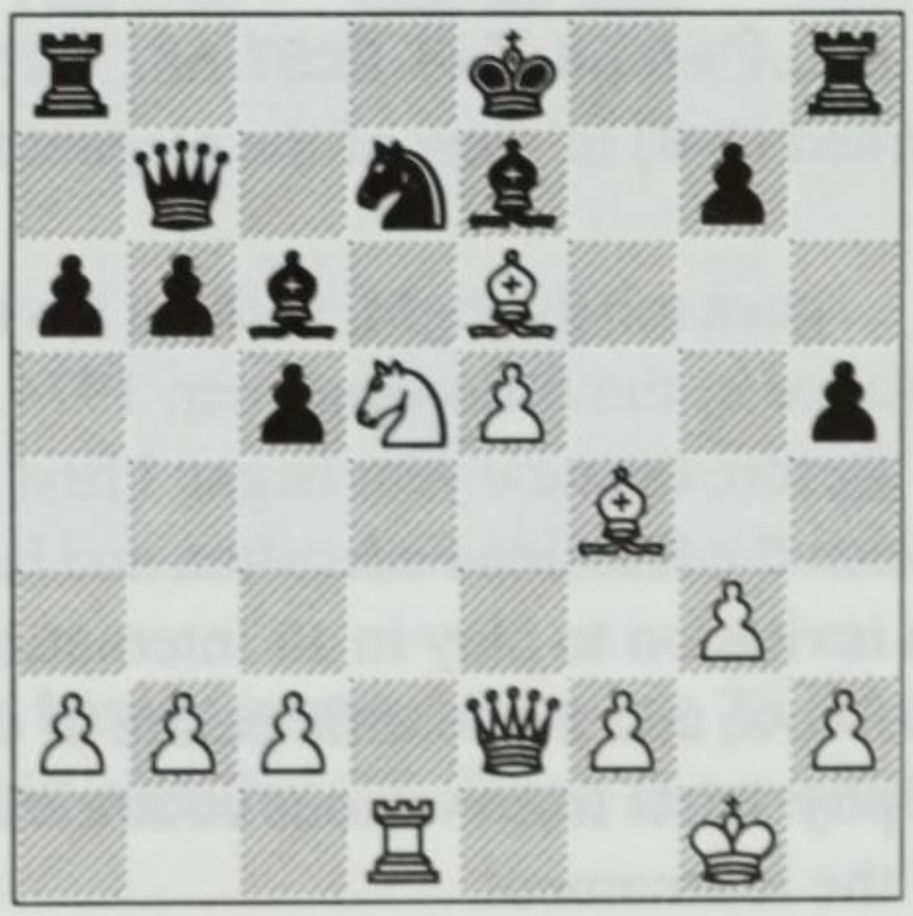
*W*



**Tal – Sveshnikov**
*USSR Ch, Moscow 1973*

**12 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 13 ♗xe6+ ♔f8 14 0-0** Also very strong is 14 e5 ♗xh1 15 exf6, when both 15...gxf6 16 ♖xd7 and 15...♘xf6 16 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 17 f3 leave White with a big advantage. **14...♕c8 15 ♖xd7 ♘xd7 16 ♖d1 ♗c6 17 ♘d5 ♕b7 18 e5 ♔e8** *(D)*

*W*



The following straightforward variation seemed too prosaic to me: 19 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 20 e6 ♕xd5 (otherwise 21 ♘c7+) 21 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 22 ♕e5 ♗c6 23 ♕c7 ♗b5 24 c4 ♗xc4 25 ♗d6!, and wins, and instead I went for something more piquant, intending in the diagrammed position, after **19 ♗f7+? ♔xf7 20 e6+ ♔f8 21 ♘xe7** ♔xe7 22 exd7+ ♔f7 (if 22...♔d8 then 23 ♗g5+ and 24 ♕e5 mate) 23 ♕c4+ ♔g6 24 ♖d6+ ♔h7 25 ♖h6+!! to give mate on the following move by 26 ♕f7. However, as early as the 21st move, Sveshnikov played more strongly by **21...♘f6!**, and in the end the game finished in a draw by perpetual check, with Black still a rook ahead.

After this I played less confidently. There was simply no question of me retaining my title, and I was faced by a different task: to stay in the Premier League. And although I made things difficult when I surprised even myself by 'throwing myself' at Petrosian and losing, the amusing little finish to my game from the final round ...

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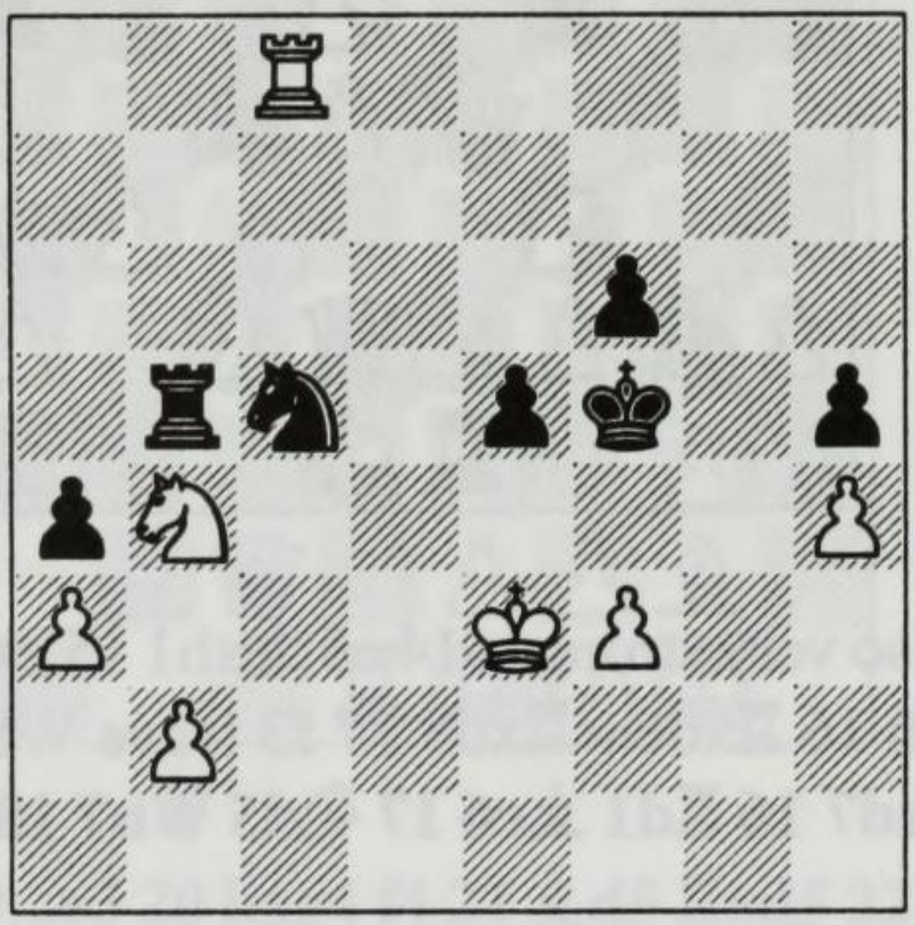


**Tal – Averkin**
*USSR Ch, Moscow 1973*

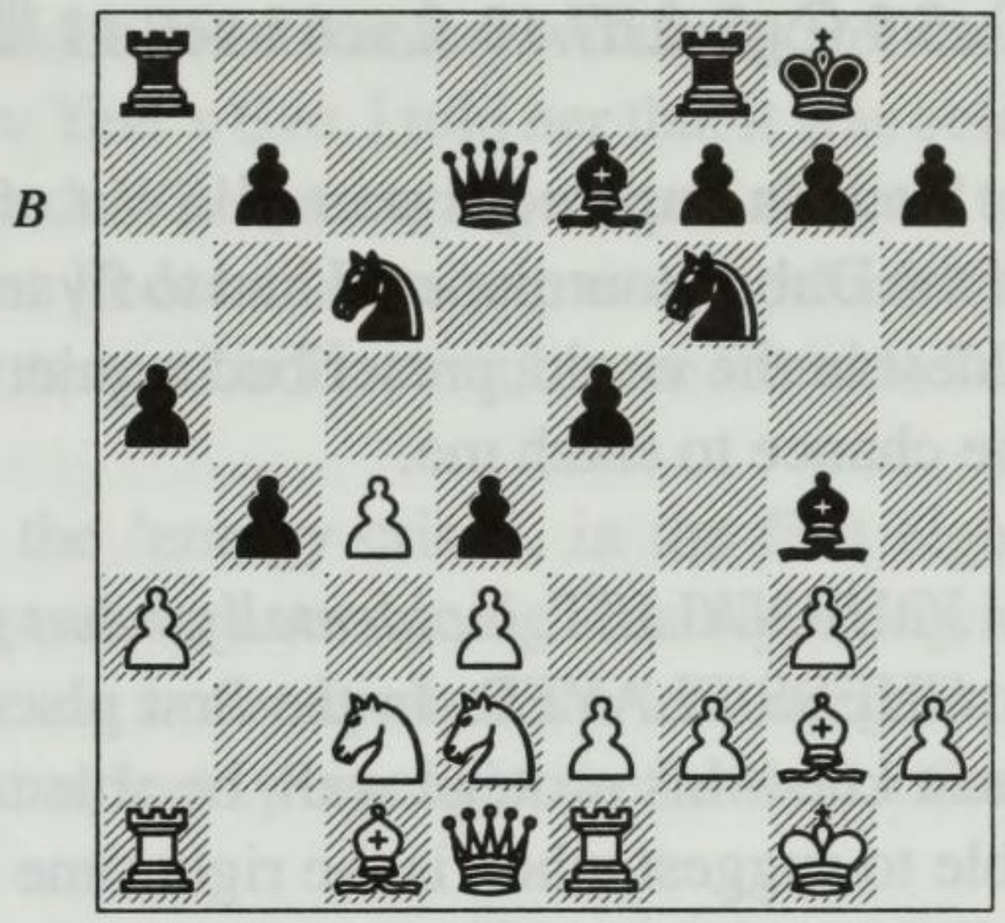
**67...♘e6 68 ♖a8 ♖c5?** 68...♘c5! **69 ♖xa4 ♖c4? 70 ♘d5!**, when Black resigned (**1-0**) in view of the elegant finish 70...♖xa4 71 ♘e7 mate.

... gave me the right, without having to be selected, to play again in the Premier League in the following year, 1974.

Before the new year began I first played six games in a Match-Tournament between the Russian Federation and Latvian teams, and then accepted with pleasure an invitation to play in an International Tournament in Dubna, a small town near Moscow, and a scientific centre of world renown. The audience there, consisting of physicists from various countries, was very congenial, as was the composition of the tournament.

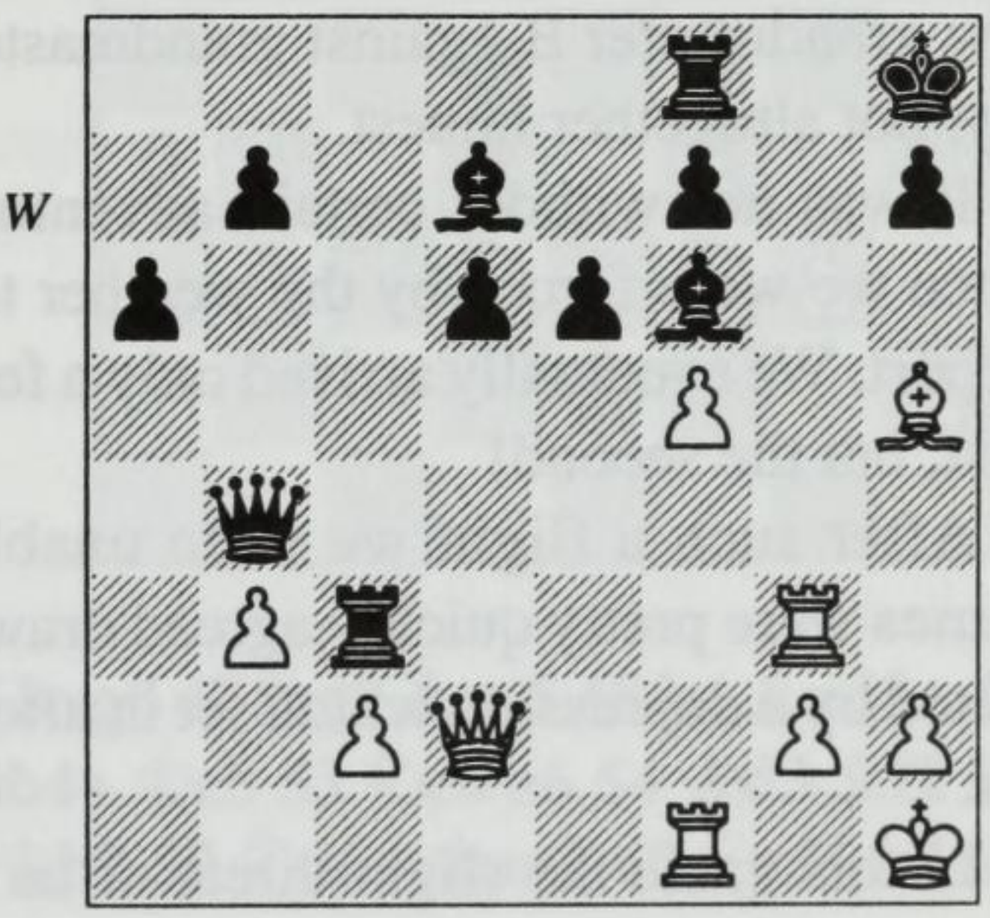
I was late for the first round, and I entered the hall just as Kholmov was giving

mate to Rukavina. It was at the start when I succeeded in playing my most interesting games (of course, I wasn't to know that it was in Dubna that my new run of unbeaten games was beginning, about which less has been written, but which lasted longer than the first). Here are some extracts from them:




**Rukavina – Tal**
*Dubna, 1973*

**13...e4!** A curious tactical finesse: in the case of 14 ♘xe4 or 14 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 15 ♘xe4, Black traps the white knight by ...b3. **14 dxe4 d3 15 ♘e3 ♗xe2 16 ♕a4 ♘g4 17 ♘df1 ♗f6 18 ♖a2 ♗c3 19 ♗d2 ♕d4 20 axb4 ♗xd2 21 ♖xd2 axb4 22 ♕b3 ♖a1 23 ♖xa1 ♕xa1 24 ♘xg4 ♘d4! 25 ♕b2 ♘f3+! 26 ♔h1 ♕e1 27 ♘ge3 ♕xf2 0-1**




**Tal – Platonov**
*Dubna, 1973*

White had aimed for this position from afar, having in mind the move **23 ♕h6!** It was only here that Black realised that on his intended 23...♖xg3 there would follow 24 ♗g6!! with inevitable mate.

He therefore resigned (**1-0**).

**Tal – Vaganian**
*Dubna, 1973*
French Defence

**1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 ♘c6 4 ♘gf3 ♘f6 5 e5 ♘d7 6 ♘b3 f6 7 ♗b5 fxe5 8 dxe5 ♘c5 9 ♘g5 ♗d7 10 ♗xc6 bxc6 11 ♕h5+ g6 12 ♕f3 1-0**

Such an impetuous start (4½ out of 5) and the fact that the day after the finish of the Dubna tournament I had to fly to the Christmas tournament in Hastings, the oldest in the world, prescribed a quiet finish, which gave Grandmaster Kholmov the chance to catch me.

JOURNALIST. *Incidentally, what general qualities should a second have?*

CHESS PLAYER. In the first place, he should be faithful to his protégé. He must know his protégé well, be able to tell his condition 'from the side', and be able to suggest when is the right time to play more reservedly, and when to give full rein to instinct. The second may be a like-minded chess thinker, or a chess antipode, it is not of great importance. On the other hand, it is most essential that he should not be overawed by the prestige of his protégé. Of course, it is important that the second should carefully follow current chess literature, since there is no point in having to invent everything anew in the process of preparation. With regard to whether or not the second is a theorist, this is not all that important.

I very much dislike 'seasonal' seconds: today he assists grandmaster A, tomorrow grandmaster B against grandmaster A, etc. This is unpleasant, and, I would say, not altogether honest.

It was not without certain adventures that Kuzmin and I reached Hastings, since we were forced by the weather to wait for more than 24 hours at Moscow airport. We eventually arrived only a few hours before the start of a round, not the first, but the second!

After such a flight we were unable to play at full strength, and both our games were pretty quickly agreed drawn. In general, my play in Hastings was affected by a depression which set in after my game with the Cuban master G. Garcia.

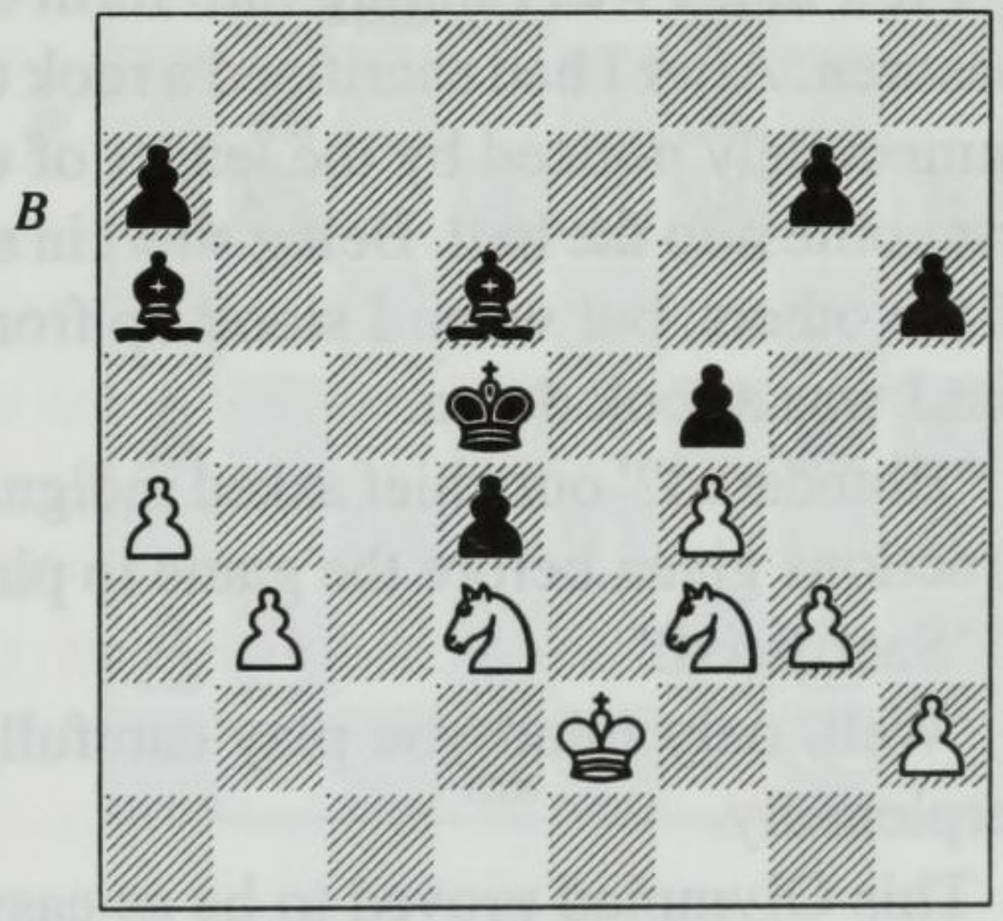
In this game the slight threat of an attack on my opponent's king persuaded him to give up the exchange, just so as to go into an ending. After a further few moves his position became hopeless, and I thought to myself: 'How good that it has all worked out so quickly; I may be in time to go to the cinema'. Especially since, due to our late arrival, Kuzmin and I had to play eight games on successive days, and we were glad of every rest hour we could find.

Then suddenly, having relaxed, I made a bad blunder, and the game continued for the full five hours, and ended in a draw.

This affected my play, as did another unexpected consequence of our late arrival. When we arrived, all the decent rooms in the hotel had been taken, and we were accommodated somewhere in the attic in a completely unheated room. Both of us – first I, then Kuzmin – caught a cold and fell ill. Even my wife could tell this from my voice when she phoned me on New Year's Eve. I told her that it was cold in our room, and the reaction was unexpected. Without saying a word about it to me she phoned Moscow and asked our Chess Federation to help me, to which the head of the Federation jokingly advised her to send to Hastings some firewood or coal.

Whatever the cause, my depression or the 'energy crisis', in the first eight rounds I scored only one win and seven draws, and was going steadily along in 7th-8th place. Then, by winning three games in a row, I joined the leading group, and when Kuzmin, having caught cold in turn, lost two games, the battle for first place intensified.

Of the games from this spurt, the ones against Stean and Hartston turned out quite well, but it was the following ending that afforded me the most pleasure:



**Suttles – Tal**
*Hastings, 1973*

**43...♗e7! 44 h4 g6 45 ♘fe5 g5 46 hxg5 hxg5 47 fxg5 ♗xg5 48 b4 ♗xd3+ 49 ♘xd3 ♗e7 50 b5 ♗d6 51 a5 ♗xg3 52 ♘b4+ ♔c5 53 ♘c6 a6 54 ♔d3 ♗f2 55 ♘a7 axb5 56 a6 b4 57 ♘b5 ♔b6 58 a7 ♔b7 59 ♘d6+ ♔xa7 60 ♘xf5 b3 61 ♘d6 ♔b6 62 ♘c4+ ♔b5 0-1**

Before the last round there was quite a large group in contention for first place. Kuzmin and Szabo quickly agreed a draw, Timman defeated Suttles, reached the Grandmaster norm and caught up with them, while after the adjournment I also

agreed a draw with the young Englishman Miles, and thus became one of the four joint winners.

I do not want to return to this theme once again, but I spent the first half of 1974 in 'hibernation'; I played only two games in a friendly match between the Sports Societies 'Daugava' and 'Avantgarde' – I think you will agree that this is too meagre a ration for a player who very much loves playing. True, in one of these games I tried out an idea which was to bring me three points in 1974.

By contrast, the remainder of the year was not just crowded, but overloaded with events.

In May there came preparations for the Olympiad in Nice, and once again we had seven grandmasters contending for the six places in the team. On this occasion my inclusion was not in doubt, and the 'superfluous seventh' turned out to be Lev Polugaevsky, a recent Candidate.

In Nice, Kuzmin, who had also been mainly inactive from January to June, and I played in most of the games in the preliminary group, in order to 'warm up'. This was very necessary, since in my first few games I made some very amusing mistakes, which in one case led to a draw with an opponent whose class of play was not all that high.

I felt that I was running into form only after the game given here with Miagmasuren. After I had sacrificed a rook the spectators gathered round, and this was immediately noticed by the leader of our delegation, V. D. Baturinsky, who had just come into the hall. Being short in stature, he was unable to see over the heads of the others, but when I stood up from the table, I confidentially informed him that I was a rook down.

'Blundered?' our chief asked indignantly, clearly ready to remind me of the instructions given before the game to play quietly and carefully.

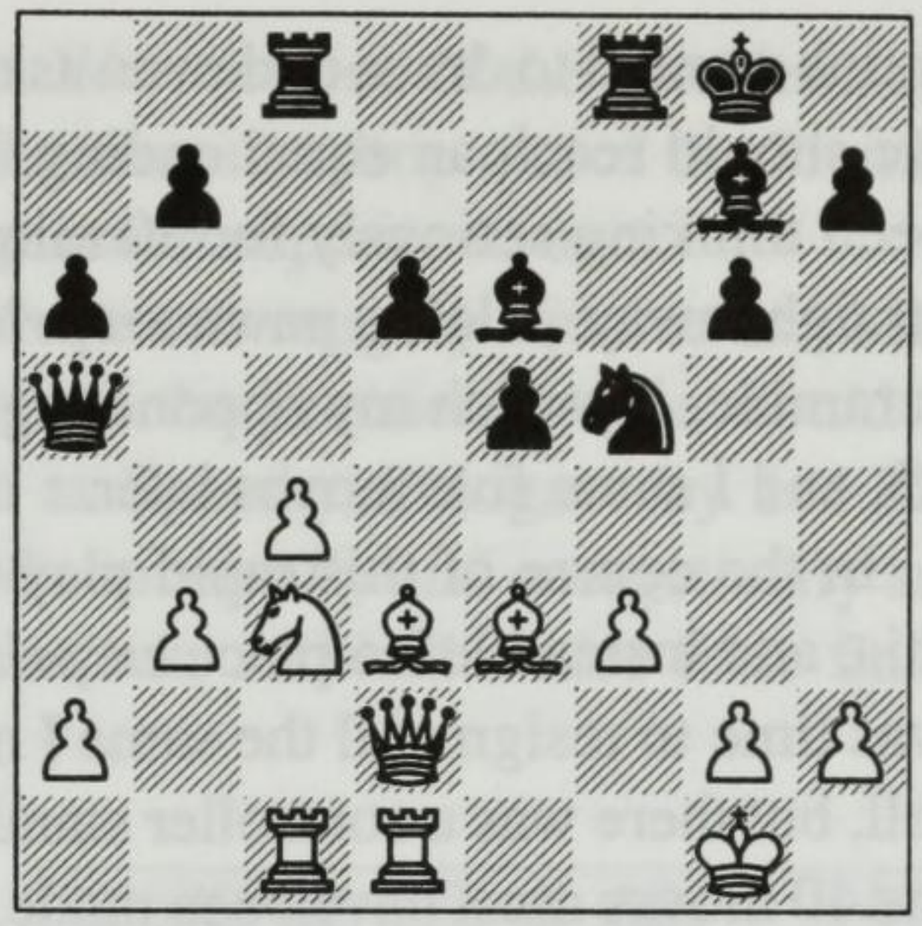
'Sacrificed!'

'Well, only mind you play carefully' (!) Baturinsky recapitulated somewhat perplexedly.

This Olympiad proved to be as easy for us as the previous one had been difficult. The team played harmoniously and accurately, and we did not suffer a single defeat, not only in the matches, but also in the individual games, and before the last round we had assured ourselves of first place.

From my games I can pick out the following one (*see diagram on following page*):

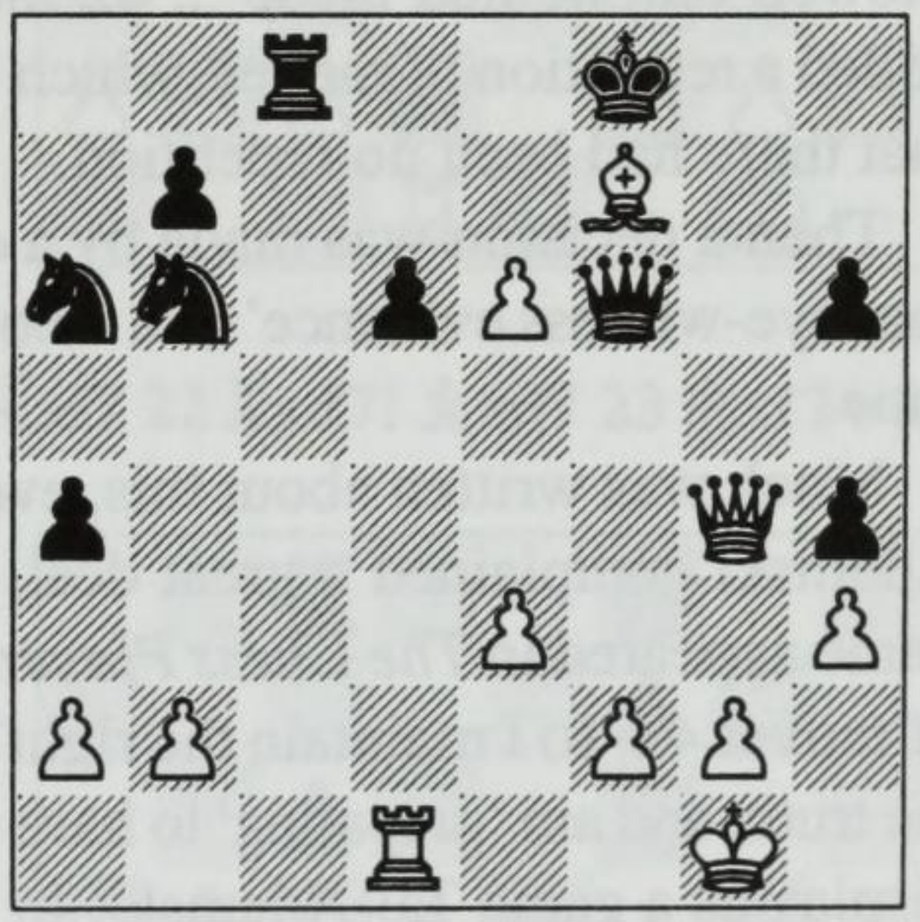
**18 ♗e4! ♖f7 19 ♕e2 ♗f8 20 ♗f2 b5 21 ♘d5 bxc4 22 ♘b6 ♖d8 23 ♗d5! ♗xd5 24 ♖xd5 ♕a3 25 ♖xc4 ♘e7 26 ♕d2! ♘xd5 27 ♘xd5** The black queen is now trapped! **27...♗h6 28 ♕xh6 ♕xa2 29 ♗h4 ♕a5 30 h3 1-0**




**Tal – Partos**
*Nice Olympiad, 1974*

Two weeks after the Olympiad I set off with my wife to a tournament in Lublin. For the first time I had a personal invitation to an event[1] while the tournament was partly holiday-like in character and not particularly strong. There were only three Grandmasters: Lengyel, Damjanović and myself.

I was on form. Here, for instance, is the finish of one game.




**Tal – Szymczak**
*Lublin, 1974*

**32 ♖xd6! ♖c1+ 33 ♔h2 ♕e5+ 34 f4 ♕xd6 35 ♕g8+ ♔e7 36 ♕e8+ ♔f6 37 ♗h5!! ♕xe6 38 ♕f8+ 1-0**

For me the culminating moment of the tournament was a victory in one game, gained by ... my wife. I would not have bothered to mention this 'semi-incident', had there not unexpectedly followed an 'epilogue'.

My game with Adamski developed in very tense fashion. My opponent very

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1 Invitations are usually controlled by the Soviet Chess Federation – *Editor's note.*

much wanted to draw, and even asked me before the game not to 'torment' him, if we should reach an equal ending. However, when he offered a draw after I had been thinking seriously for 30 minutes, I was irritated, instantly declined it, and straight away ... left a pawn *en prise.* We concluded the game in a terrible time-scramble, in which my opponent gave up recording the game round about move 25, and I some five moves later.

In the course of this rapid play I could have forced a draw, but I overlooked this, and instead left a piece *en prise.* Adamski made his move, and I saw that it was time to resign. All the same I made one more move, and my opponent's flag fell, but there was a controller standing by, and he said nothing, so I assumed that the 40 moves must have been made. Holding out my hand in a sign of resignation, I suddenly heard the voice of my wife, speaking in Latvian: 'Have you made up some new rules or something? After all, he's lost on time!' I replied in Russian that there was a controller for that, but she held up the fingers of both hands: that was how my wife had been counting the moves.

We reconstructed the score, and it turned out that Black had indeed not managed to make his 40th move. My opponent took my scoresheet, rewrote it, and showed that he had made ... 42 moves. It turned out that Adamski had simply added a repetition of moves, which was quite ridiculous: the controller confirmed that there had been no repetition.

Then a decision was made by a commission of appeal, which, on the basis of the 'eye-witness evidence' of a whole series of participants, confirmed the loss on time.

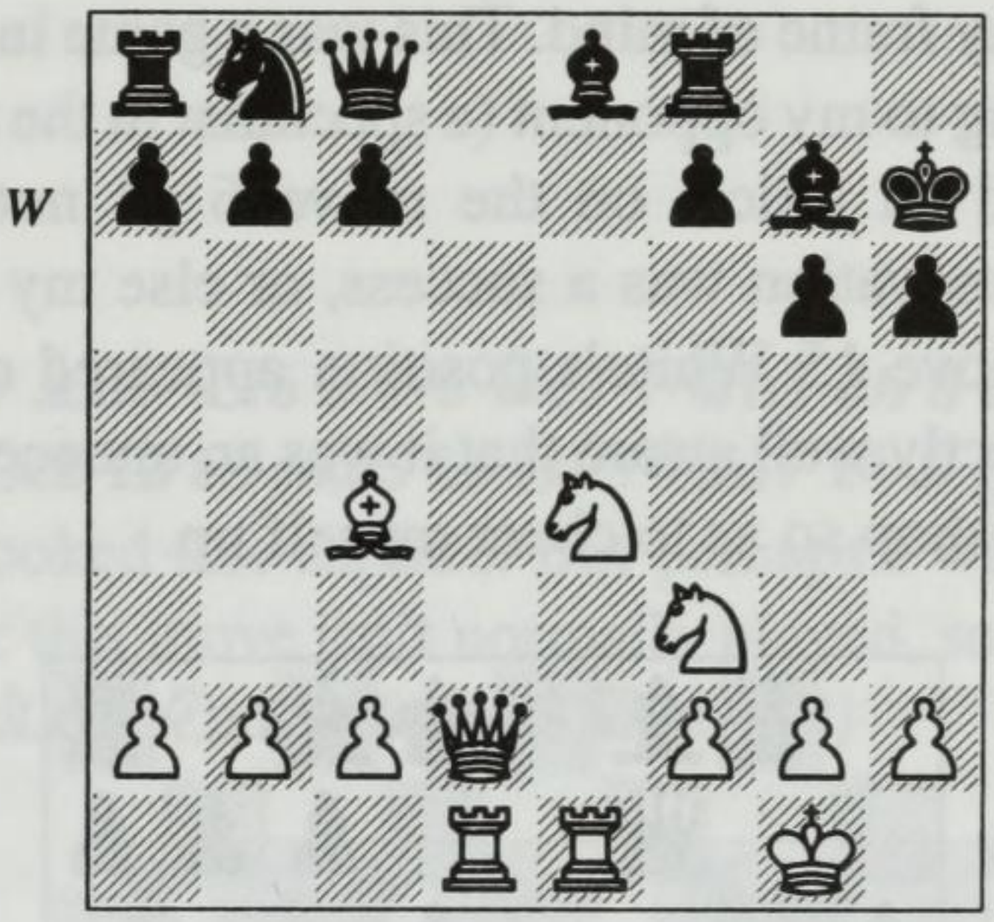
Much was written about this, even in the pages of the Polish non-chess press. Adamski complained a great deal, but the end of this episode amused me. The game appeared in *The Chess Player* with notes by Adamski, and the total number of moves 42, so I maintain the right to make an equally bare-faced falsification of the truth, and am 'preparing' to have published one of my wins from a simultaneous display as a game Tal-Adamski. In the end, this will be just as much the 'truth'.

In order to conclude the tale of the Lublin Tournament, I should also say that there was no real battle for first place, but my wife, unlike her husband, is very jealous as regards the position of Tal in the FIDE rating list, and after consultations with the chief controller and some calculations, she revealed that in order to maintain my rating I required not just first place, but 12½ points out of the 15 possible. When, partly giving in to her insistence, I won in the 13th round, she guiltily informed me that she had apparently made a mistake, and that 12 points would suffice. I 'promised' her that I would lose one of my games, but all the same finished with two quick draws.

I hardly had time to return to Riga before I set off for the Team Championship

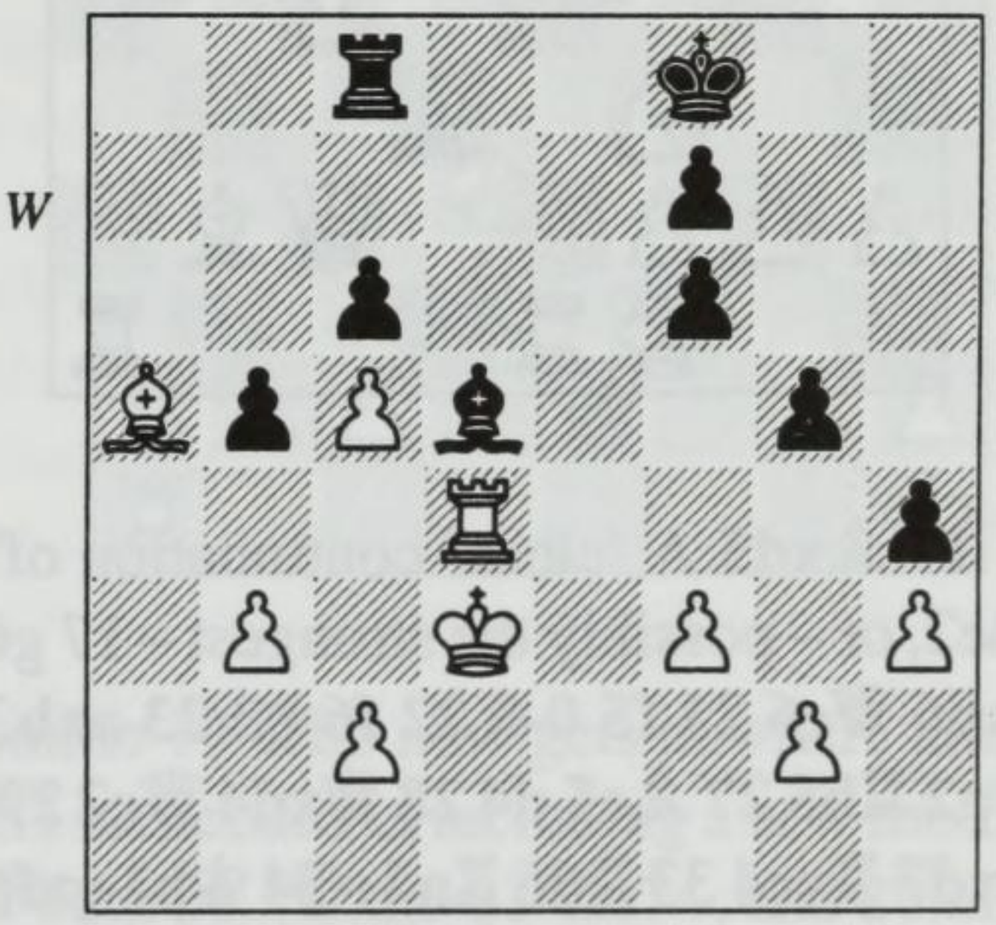
of the Soviet Union with the 'Daugava' team. We were one of the outsiders, and everyone thought that we would be one of the teams to drop out of the Premier League. Almost all our opponents had ratings much superior to ours.

Who could have guessed that, apart from the teams roughly equal to us, 'Moldova' and 'Zenit', the other team to drop out of the Premier League would be 'Lokomotiv', headed by Grandmasters such as Spassky, Polugaevsky and Platonov? But that is what happened. We played concertedly and energetically and I succeeded in defeating Petrosian with an attack, and had a nice little finish against Bronstein.



**Tal – Petrosian**
*USSR Club Championship, 1974*

**19 ♘eg5+! hxg5 20 ♘xg5+ ♔g8 21 ♕f4 ♘d7 22 ♖xd7! ♗xd7 23 ♗xf7+ 1-0**



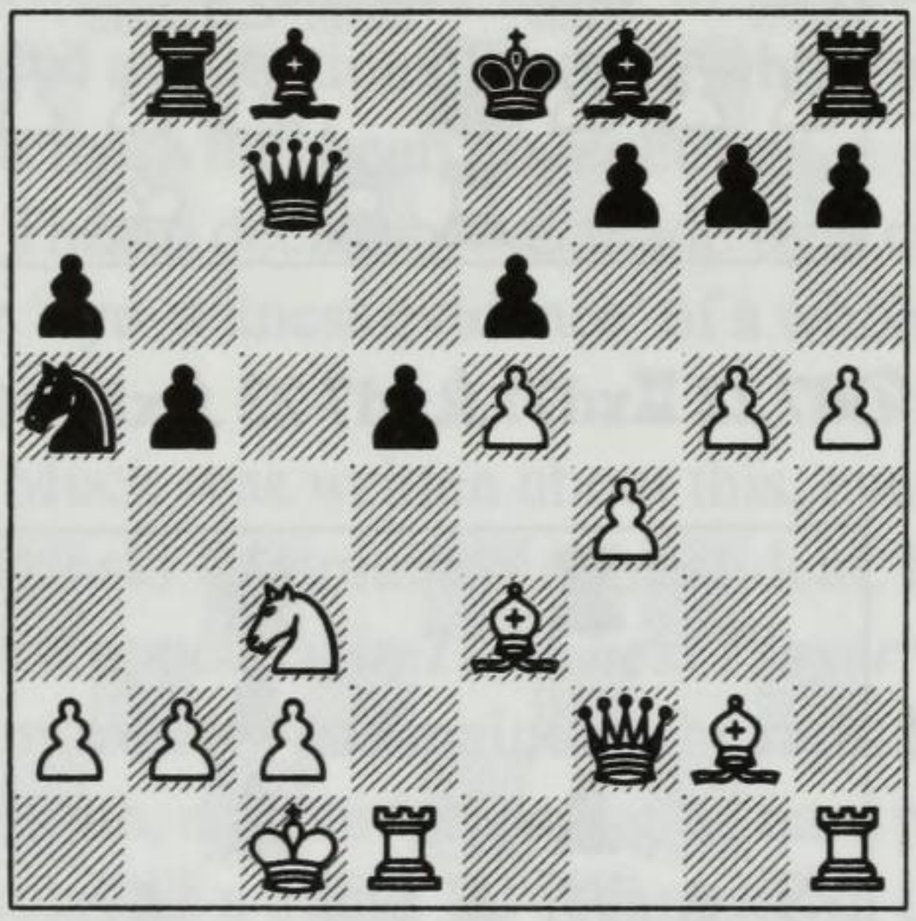
**Tal – Bronstein**
*USSR Club Championship, 1974*

**31 ♖xd5! cxd5 32 ♔d4 ♔e7 33 ♔xd5 ♔d7 34 b4! ♖e8 35 c6+ ♔c8 36 c4 ♖e5+ 37 ♔d4 bxc4 38 ♔xc4 ♖e2 39 b5 ♖c2+ 40 ♔d5 ♖a2 41 ♗c3 ♖xg2 42 b6 ♖f2 43 b7+ ♔b8 44 ♗xf6 1-0**

The result was that I took first place on the top board: among those also left behind were Spassky, Smyslov, Geller... Within a few days I flew to East Germany to a tournament in Halle.

I was already in Berlin before I was told that the second Soviet participant would be Grandmaster Savon, replacing Kuzmin, who was unwell. This tournament went much more calmly for me than the one in Lublin. I drew several games in the first few rounds, in a couple of which I was the defending side, while my win over Liebert did not make me particularly happy because it was so unconvincing.

Then, in the fifth round, I played a game which did not strengthen my tournament position, but – and this is much more important – it significantly improved my frame of mind. This was a game in which I introduced an innovation, according to my opponent (a specialist in the Scheveningen Variation) who had published an article on the move 6 g4 not long before the tournament. Either the innovation was a success, or else my opponent reacted incorrectly to it, but by move 15 White's position appeared overwhelming. Then, although I was perfectly well aware that it was an unnecessary move, and not the best, I sacrificed a bishop so as to cheer myself up.



**Tal – Malich**
*Halle, 1974*

**17 ♗xd5** A 'clean' continuation of the attack would be either 17 ♔b1, or 17 ♘e2, or – possibly the strongest – 17 g6. **17...b4 18 ♘e4 exd5 19 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 20 exd6 ♕c6 21 f5 0-0 22 f6 b3 23 axb3 ♘xb3+ 24 ♔b1 ♕a4 25 cxb3 ♕e4+ 26 ♔a2 ♖b5 27 ♗c5 d4 28 ♕xd4 ♕c2 29 ♕c4 ♕xc4 30 bxc4 ♖xc5 31 d7 ♗xd7 32 ♖xd7 ♖xc4 33 ♖d6 ♖a4+ 34 ♔b1 gxf6 35 gxf6 h6 36 ♖h3 ♖a5 37 ♔c2 ♖c5+ 38 ♔d2 a5 39 b3 ♖g5 40 ♔c3 ♖c8+ 41 ♔b2 ♖cc5 ½-½**

At the end of the tournament, this game was awarded a special prize by the magazine *Schach*.

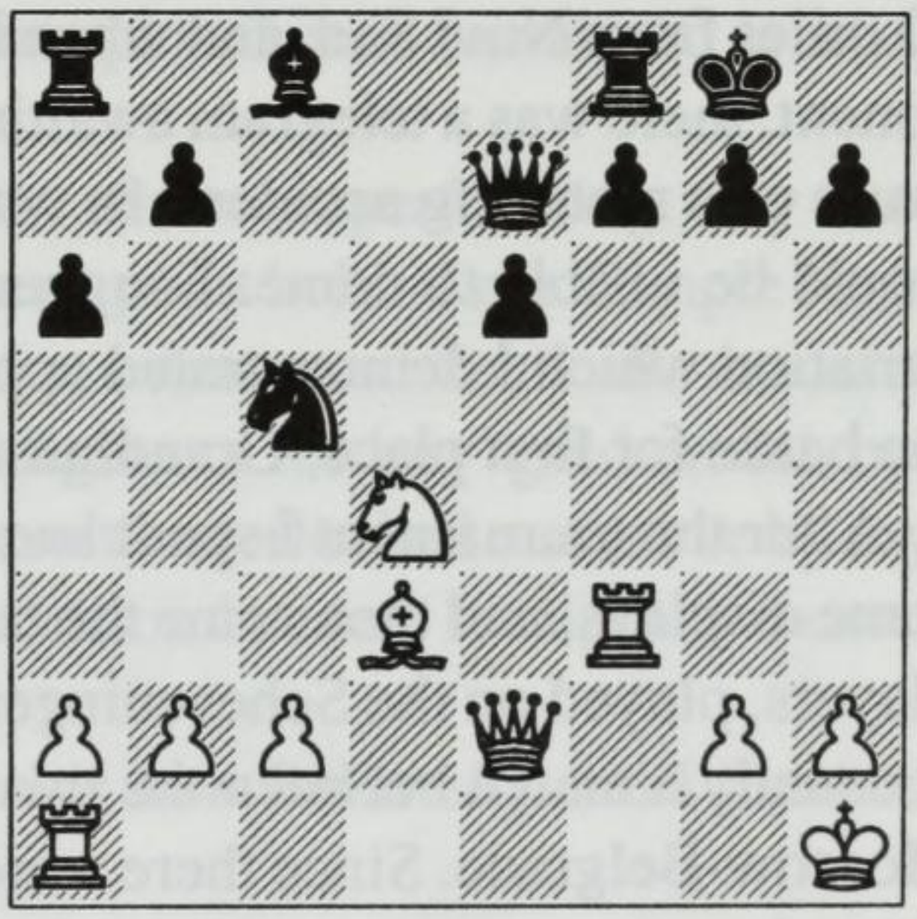
Instead of an extra half point, I thus obtained an excellent supply of optimism, and between the 6th and 13th rounds drew only two games while winning six. These included an important win over Knaak, which is given here. This led to me taking the lead, and two draws at the finish were sufficient to give me first place.

The tournament was the main, but by no means the only event, in a chess festival dedicated to the Jubilee of the German Democratic Republic. Thus I gave several simultaneous displays (alone, unfortunately; Savon had to hurry on to Odessa). I particularly recall my last two appearances on a holiday in Berlin, where I succeeded in playing the following game.

**Tal – N.N.**
*Berlin simul, 1975*
Sicilian Defence

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 a6 5 ♗d3 ♘f6 6 0-0 ♕c7 7 ♔h1 d6 8 f4 ♘bd7 9 ♘d2 ♗e7 10 ♘2f3 0-0 11 ♕e2 ♘c5 12 e5 dxe5 13 fxe5 ♘fd7 14 ♗g5 ♘xe5** To be perfectly honest, I had overlooked this capture. But perhaps I was 'justified', in that I was prompted to think: this move isn't normally played, so I had to find a reason why it was bad ... **15 ♗xe7 ♘xf3 16 ♖xf3 ♕xe7** *(D)*

*W*



**17 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 18 ♖h3+ ♔g8** The routine 19 ♕h5 now gets nowhere after the equally routine 19...f6, but in an old idea I succeeded in including a new motif. **19 ♘f5 ♕g5 20 ♕h5! 1-0** He is mated after both 20...♕xh5 21 ♘e7+, and 20...f6 21 ♘e7 mate. (I find this latter variation the more pleasing.)

It was during these displays that I was informed that essentially I would not be able to go home. Grandmaster Kholmov could not go to the tournament in Novi

Sad, and it turned out that no one except me could replace him at the last minute. I would have declined to play in any other event – the surfeit of play was beginning to tell to some extent – but Yugoslavia was a special case. After spending just one day at home, I once again set out for the airport.

Even so, I arrived only in time for the start of the third round, having found out on the way that my colleagues in the tournament, Grandmasters Forintos and Radulov, had so far scored 0 out of 4! Going straight from the 'plane to the tournament hall, I quickly shared with Radulov the first Grandmaster point.

On the following day, my excessively wild play against Kirov led to the ending of my long unbeaten run, although for a greater part of the game my opponent was not thinking in terms of more than a draw. Then came a draw in one of the postponed games (the leaders in the meantime had set a furious pace and were far ahead) and I began to wonder whether on this occasion my favourable Yugoslav sky was covered by clouds. However, in the middle of the tournament I managed to increase my pace, and I scored 5½ points out of 6 at the finish, and I could assure myself of first place by winning my adjourned game from the last round against Buljovčić.

At first glance it appeared that the adjourned position was a dead draw, but even before the adjournment I had seen a curious manoeuvre which led by force to a won queen ending. But I was unable to actually play it. Buljovčić lives some 30 miles from Novi Sad, and when I arrived for the resumption, instead of my opponent, there was a telegram awaiting me. Buljovčić apologised, and said that because of a motoring accident, in which, fortunately, only the car had suffered, he would be unable to come. I suggested that the position be adjudicated, and the variation which I demonstrated appeared convincing enough to my main rival in the battle for first place, Grandmaster Forintos.

After the tournament I spent some two more weeks in Yugoslavia. First I gave some displays, and then came the traditional match between Soviet and Yugoslav players, played on the Scheveningen System[1] with six players to each team. This is usually a match between the two countries, but at first it was decided to call it Moscow-Belgrade. Since there were only two Muscovites in our team, we appropriated an incomprehensible name: Combined Team of USSR Clubs. We could not simply call ourselves the USSR Team, since most of our leading Grandmasters were not playing.

To be honest, I was intending to have something of a rest during this match, and was counting on there being a reserve player, but there turned out not to be

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1 Every member of each team plays against every member of the opposing team – *Editor's note*

one, and I had to play in every round. I won one game, against Ivkov, who committed a 70-year-old theoretical mistake, and the remainder were not particularly fighting draws.

We nevertheless won the match.

It is not at all surprising that for the main event of the year – the USSR Championship Premier League – I arrived extremely tired. Here there were many young players, playing energetically and as equals with more experienced Grandmasters.

As usual I lost in the first round to Polugaevsky, but then managed to win several games, including one against Dvoretsky, which won the best game prize, and which is given here.

With a successful run in the middle of the tournament – during which I played the game against Taimanov given here – I took the lead. True, the first alarm signal was also heard: in my game with Vaganian, in a completely won position, I carelessly fell into a cunningly prepared trap.

JOURNALIST. *It often happens that you are leading, or are trying to catch a leader. Which is easier?*

CHESS PLAYER. The latter, of course, since there is an additional stimulus. Besides, for me it is more pleasant to be trying to catch up. If they are chasing me, then the thing that happened in this USSR Championship in Leningrad is what frequently occurs.

In the penultimate round I played Beliavsky, who was performing very successfully, and who, together with Vaganian, was a point behind me. Simple logic suggested that as White I should play quietly for a draw, and that's all. A somewhat prejudiced attitude to youth forced me to fight not for 'my' gold medal, but 'for the honour' of my chess generation. As a result I overlooked one move by my opponent, and from being in my favour, the position became level, then worse, and after a further mistake – lost.

There were now two of us in front, and level is how Beliavsky and I finished up.

Once again a year ended, and once again there began a lengthy pause. True, I studied chess, but not altogether in my usual way: at the request of Anatoly Karpov I spent some time with him, for we believed that the Fischer-Karpov match would take place...

At the beginning of April the position regarding the World Championship became clear, and I set off to the tournament in Las Palmas. A very interesting and unusual resort, but... Not only the old hands of the tournament, who were taking part for the fourth time, but even the local residents could not remember such cold

weather at that time of the year. The mean April temperature in Las Palmas is 20°C, whereas for us it was around 14°C. There was no question of any bathing or long walks.

About half of the participants in the tournament were contenders for the top places – all were Grandmasters of excellent repute, and with a high Elo coefficient. The other half could objectively only hope for isolated sensational success, and that is how it worked out.

The game with Mecking gave me a poor start to the tournament. Twice I committed inaccuracies, then equalised the position, but not long before the first time control 'found' almost the only losing move.

The furious start by Grandmaster Ljubojević settled the question of first place several rounds before the finish. Just when I gained some illusory hopes of catching him, I overlooked a mate against Olafsson, again on the back rank, just as in the Alekhine Memorial Tournament.

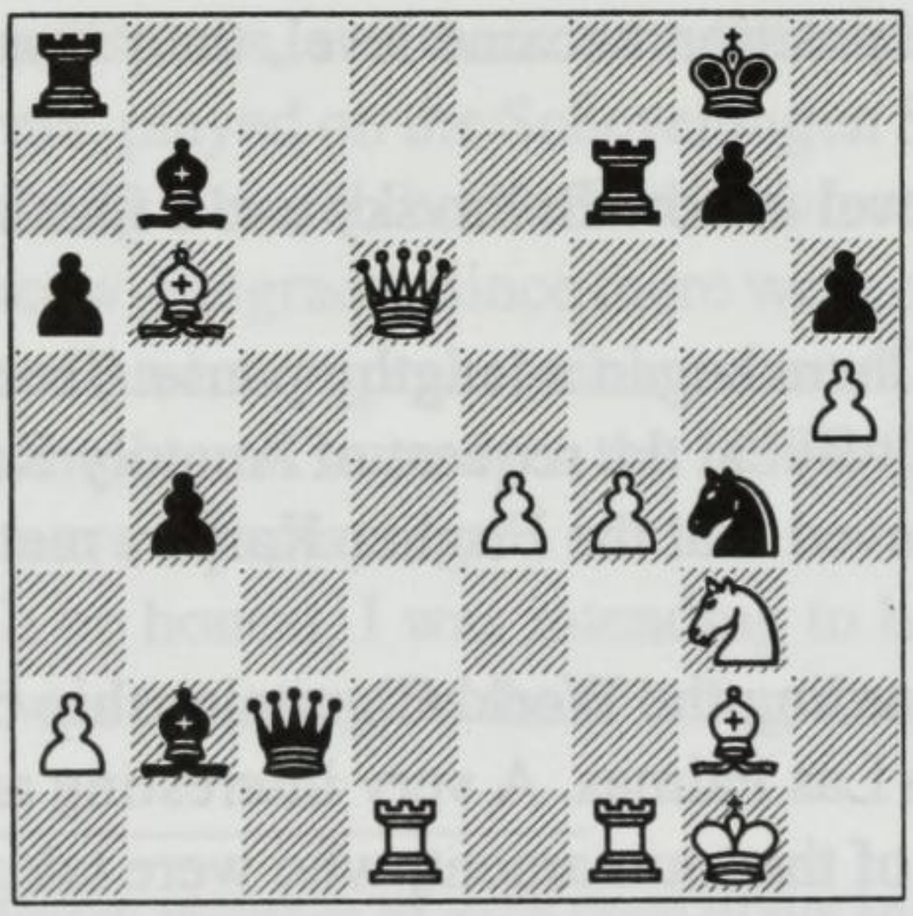
From my games I can pick out the attack against Pomar, and the following encounter, which was awarded a special prize for the most interesting game of the tournament.

**Ljubojević – Tal**

*Las Palmas, 1975*

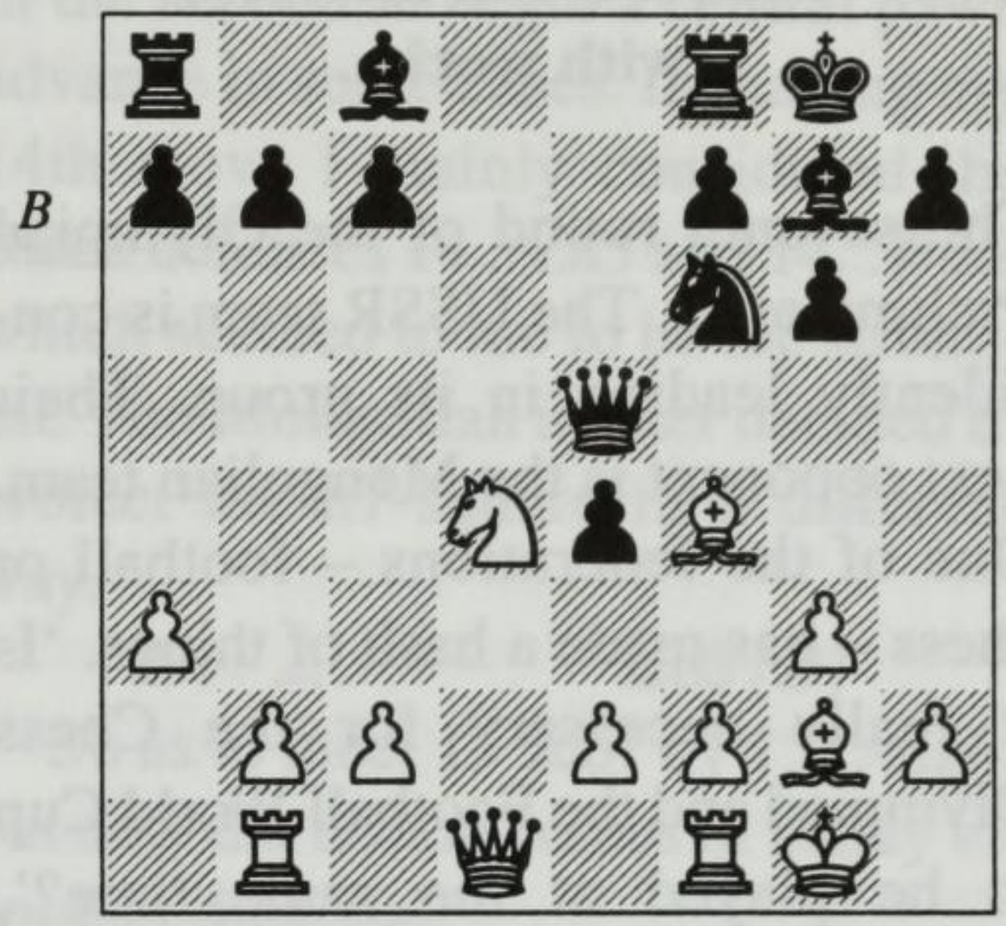
Sicilian Defence

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 g4 a6 7 g5 ♘fd7 8 h4 b5 9 h5 b4 10 ♘ce2 ♗b7 11 ♗g2 ♘c5 12 ♘g3 ♘bd7 13 f4 ♗e7 14 ♕g4 h6 15 g6 0-0 16 gxf7+ ♖xf7 17 ♗e3 ♕c7 18 0-0 ♗f6 19 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 20 ♕xe6 ♗xb2 21 ♖ad1 ♘f6 22 ♕xd6 ♘g4 23 ♗b6 ♕xc2** *(D)*



**24 ♕e6 ♘f6 25 ♘f5 ♖e8 26 ♖d8 ♖xd8 27 ♗xd8 ♗xe4 28 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 29 ♗b6 ♕d3 30 ♖e1 ♘d6! 31 ♘xd6 ♕g3+ 32 ♔f1 ♕f3+ ½-½**

My game with Pomar also turned out quite well; here my opponent played too openly for a draw with White.



**Pomar – Tal**
*Las Palmas, 1975*

**15...♕h5! 16 ♗xc7 ♗h3 17 ♗f4 ♘g4 18 f3 exf3 19 ♘xf3 ♖ad8 20 ♕c1 ♖fe8 21 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 22 ♖d1 ♘xh2! 23 ♖xd8** In the case of 23 ♘xh2, White is mated after 23...♖xe2 24 ♖xd8+ ♗f8. **23...♘xf3+ 24 exf3 ♖xd8 25 c3 ♗h6! 26 ♕f1 ♕xf1+ 27 ♖xf1 ♗xf4 28 gxf4 ♖d2 29 ♖f2 ♖xf2 30 ♔xf2 b5!**, and the pawn ending is hopeless for White.

By winning my final games, I shared 2nd-4th places with Mecking and Andersson.

That is my biography from the first day of my chess life to the present.

JOURNALIST. *And your plans.*

CHESS PLAYER. To play!

Game 97

**Tal – Miagmasuren**

*Nice Olympiad, 1974*

English Opening

**When football interferes with work...**

The seventh round of the Olympiad Preliminaries. The USSR team is confidently leading in its group. Their next opponent is the Mongolian team. One of the federations – football or chess – has made a hash of things. 'Is it really necessary for the Chess Olympiad and the Football World Cup to be played at the same time?', gloomily joked football supporters from various countries, who had gathered in Nice on chess matters. There were various degrees of distraction. Thus the leader of the Brazilian players, H. Mecking, preferred to spend his playing time by the television screen, and his team was awarded a loss by default. Others, fortunately, were more restrained. Other things being equal they were not against concluding their game from the seventh round a little earlier, since on this day the Football World Cup opened with the match between Brazil and Yugoslavia.

**1 c4**

The Mongolian is a player with a strong leaning towards tactics. In answer to 1 e4 he adopts various sharp systems of the Ruy Lopez. Therefore, as in our first encounter (Tallinn 1971), I avoided the early advance of my king's pawn.

**1 ... e6**
**2 ♘c3 ♗b4**

This is in no way inferior to various other moves, although it is played much more rarely.

**3 ♘f3 d5**
**4 d4**

It is possible that Black's previous move was not the most accurate since White, by continuing 4 ♕b3, could have gained the advantage of the two bishops. What I didn't like, however, was the fact that after 4...♗xc3 5 ♕xc3 ♘f6 White's advantage is of a very academic nature. I wanted to reach a more lively position. Besides, I considered that since my opponent during the first three moves had 'got away' from theory, he would hardly want to return to normal lines. That is indeed what happened.

**4 ... ♘e7**

Once again a perfectly possible continuation. True, from e7 the knight does not take part in the struggle for the e4-square, but, on the other hand, any possible pin along the g5-d8 diagonal is rendered practically harmless.

**5 e3**

Whatever my opponent has done, I am playing White against the Nimzo-Indian Defence!

**5 ... c5**
**6 ♗d3 dxc4**

Also possible was the immediate 6...0-0 since the thematic sacrifice 7

♗xh7+ ♔xh7 8 ♘g5+ is clearly insufficient after 8...♔g6!

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **7** | **♗xc4** | **0-0** |
| **8** | **0-0** | **♘bc6** |
| **9** | **a3** | **cxd4** |

Here one might disagree with Black. It was hardly good to open the e-file for White and it soon becomes clear that Black's kingside is not very securely defended. In my opinion, 9...♗xc3 10 bxc3 ♕c7 deserved preference, so as after 11 e4 to begin a siege of the pawn centre on the lines of certain variations of the Grünfeld Defence or the Queen's Gambit. It would also be interesting to examine the consequences of 9...♗a5.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **10** | **exd4** | **♗xc3** |
| **11** | **bxc3** | **b6** |

Here again 11...♕c7 was more cautious. Black's intended fianchetto development of his queen's bishop entails a weakening of the e6-square.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | **♕d3** | **♗b7** |
| **13** | **♖e1** | |

Already at this moment I wanted to take decisive action. However a calculation of the variations convinced me that after 13 ♘g5 ♘g6! (not, of course, 13...♘f5 14 ♘xe6) 14 ♕h3 h6 neither 15 ♘xe6 nor 15 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 16 ♗xe6 ♕f6 promises a great deal. Against 14 ♖e1 Black can defend by 14...♘ce7.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **13** | **...** | **h6** |

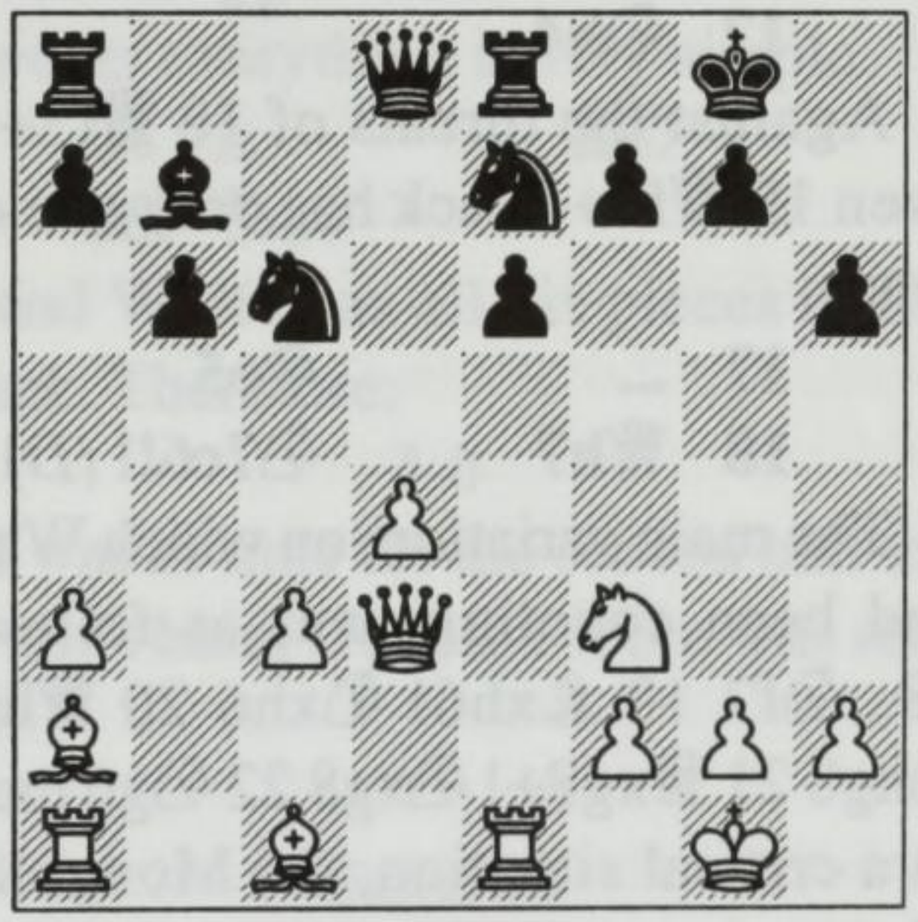
Now 14 ♘g5 was really threatened.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **14** | **♗a2** | |

It is curious that in the Olympiad Bulletin, White's move was given as 14 ♗d2. It is possible that this move is also not bad (against the continuation which occurred in the game it would have won very quickly), but I had different plans: in the first place, to try to exploit the undefended state of h7, and in the second to begin a central pawn advance in some cases. In making my 14th move I mainly considered the Black defences 14...♘f5 and 14...♕d6, which seemed to me to be the strongest. The Mongolian master decided to protect the h7-square in a different way.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **14** | **...** | **♖e8** *(D)* |

So as to meet 15 ♗b1 by 15...♘g6, but now the bishop comes in handy on another diagonal.




| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **15** | **♖xe6!** | |

At this moment I must admit that I was practically convinced that I would be able to combine business with pleasure.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **15** | **...** | **fxe6** |
| **16** | **♗xe6+** | **♔f8** |

Black would lose immediately after 16...♔h8 17 ♘g5! After the text,

White had intended (and even wrote down on his scoresheet) the plausible move 17 ♕h7. It would seem that in this case the game should finish within a couple of moves, for example: 17...♕d6 18 ♗xh6! or 17...♘d5 18 ♕g8+ ♔e7 19 ♕f7+ ♔d6 20 ♗xd5 ♕e7 (20...♖e7 21 ♗f4+ ♔d7 22 ♗e6 mate) 21 ♗f4+ ♔d7 22 ♗xc6+! ♗xc6 23 ♘e5+. At the last moment, however, I noticed that Black could play 17...♘g6! 18 ♕xg6 ♕f6 and White is forced to exchange queens. True, his position remains better than good after 19 ♕xf6+ gxf6 20 ♗xh6+ ♔e7 21 d5, but even so, an ending ... Suddenly another possibility came to me, and I played ...

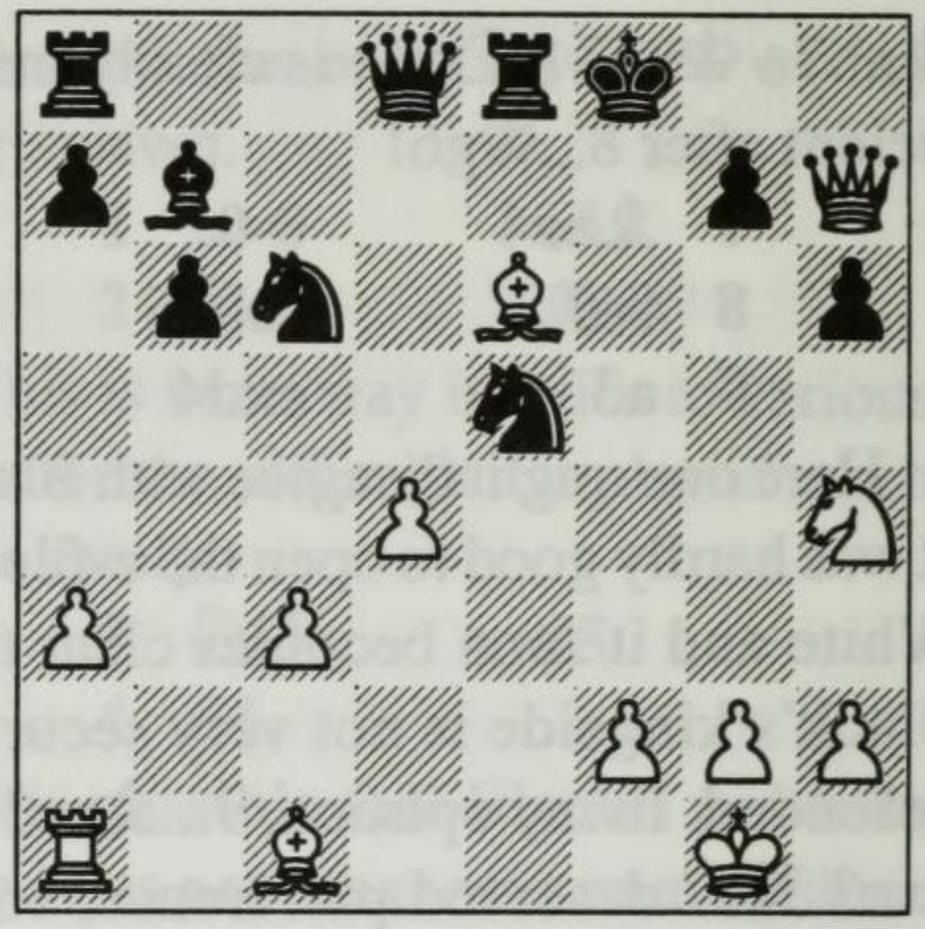
**17 ♘h4**

Against the threats of 18 ♕f3+ or even 18 ♕f5+ Black has only one defence.

**17 ... ♘e5**

**18 ♕h7 ♘7c6!!** *(D)*

The main variation, on which White had been counting, was as follows: 18...♘f7 19 ♗xh6! ♘xh6 20 ♕h8+ ♘hg8 21 ♕xg8+! ♘xg8 22 ♘g6 mate. In a critical situation, the Mongolian Master here, and to the end of the game, plays most ingeniously, but alas, it turns out that White's position is too strong. The move made by Miagmasuren is the only chance of continuing the resistance. Black loses immediately after 18...♘d5 19 ♕g8+ ♔e7 20 ♘f5+ ♔f6 21 dxe5+ ♔xe5 22 f4+ ♔e4 (or 22...♘xf4 23 ♗xf4+ ♔xf4 24 ♖f1+ etc.) 23 ♘d6+! ♕xd6 24 ♕h7+.



**19 ♕g8+ ♔e7**

**20 ♘f5+ ♔f6**

**21 dxe5+ ♘xe5**

**22 ♕xg7+ ♔xe6**

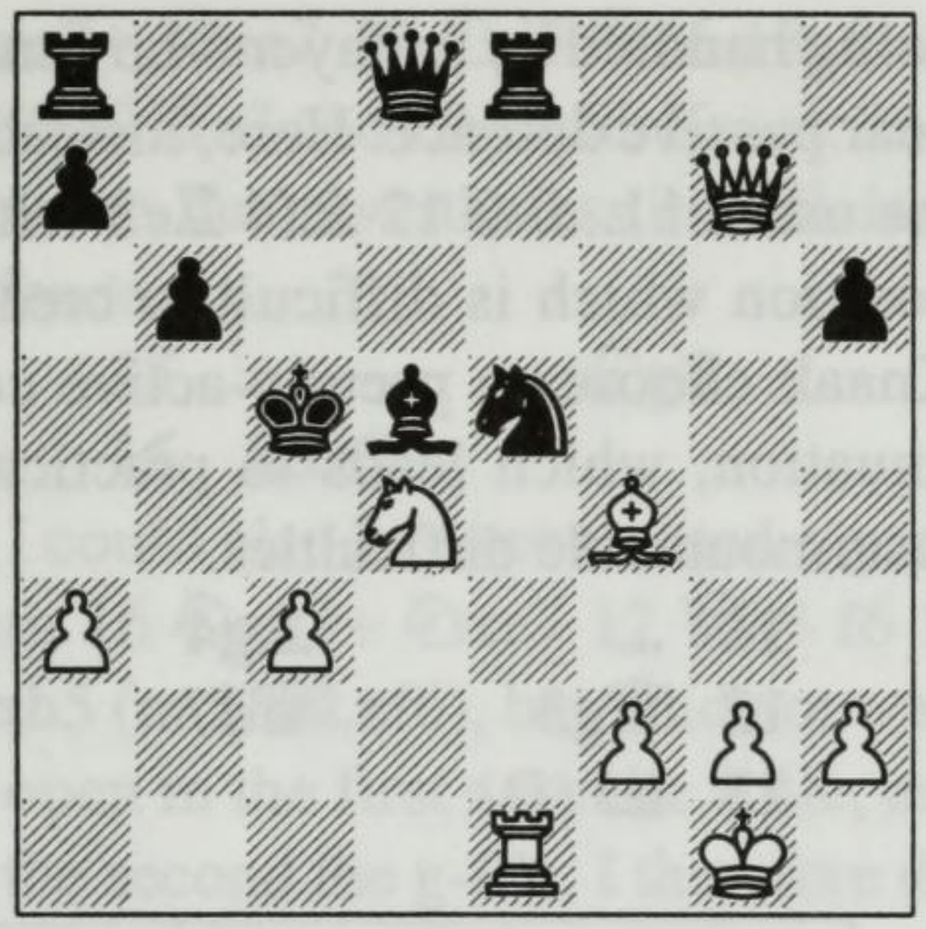
**23 ♘d4+ ♔d6**

When I was considering my 17th move, this resulting position had seemed absolutely clear: 24 ♕xb7 'with material advantage and an attack'. It turns out, however, that things are not so simple, and it would have been better to have forgotten about football for a while. The point is that after 24 ♕xb7 Black replies 24...♕d7!, and White must either exchange, or else retreat his queen to the awkward square a6 (25 ♕e4? ♘f3+). How useful the bishop would have been on d2! However, although White has no time to capture the bishop, he can win the knight.

**24 ♗f4 ♗d5**

**25 ♖e1 ♔c5!** *(D)*

It seems that the only place on the whole board where the black king can feel relatively safe is on White's queenside.




**26 ♖xe5**

White wishes to include his queen in the attack as quickly as possible.

**26 ... ♖xe5**

On 26...♖g8 I was intending 27 ♕b7! with irresistible threats.

**27 ♕xe5 ♕d7**

**28 ♘c2!**

White is forced to combine attack and defence, since 28...♖e8 was threatened.

**28 ... ♖e8**

**29 ♕d4+**

Avoiding the cunning trap set by my opponent: 29 ♗e3+ ♔b5 30 c4+ ♔xc4 31 ♕d4+ ♔b5 32 ♕d3+ ♔c6 33 ♘b4+ ♔b7 34 ♕xd5+ (34 ♘xd5 ♖d8) 34...♕xd5 35 ♘xd5 ♖d8 36 ♘c3 ♖d3 and the outcome of the game is not at all clear. White thought for about 20 minutes before finding a decisive continuation of the attack, the point of which lies in his 32nd move.

**29 ... ♔c6**

**30 c4**

Weaker is 30 ♕a4+ b5 31 ♕a6+ ♔c5.

**30 ... ♗e6**

**31 ♕e4+**

After 31 ♘b4+ ♔b7 32 ♕e4+ ♗d5! White would be in danger of losing.

**31 ... ♔c5**

**32 h3!**

This is the whole point. Now, by ridding himself of the mating threats on his back rank, White can turn his whole attention to the attack. Black has no useful moves: after 32....♗xh3 it is simplest to continue as in the game.

**32 ... ♗f5**

**33 ♗e3+ ♔d6**

**34 ♕f4+**

The attempt at brilliancy, 34 c5+, would only have led to a lengthening of the struggle after 34...♔c7. Now, however everything is very simple.

**34 ... ♔e7**

**35 ♘d4**

and White has all his pieces in the attack. Therefore:

**1-0**

I was in time for the second half after all. Thank God, the score was still 0-0.

Game 98

**Tal – Knaak**

*Halle 1974*

Ruy Lopez

**1 e4 ♘c6**

**2 ♘f3**

The young East German Champion plays very actively, and in games with him there is no necessity to avoid the main theoretical continuations.

**2 ... e5**
**3 ♗b5 a6**
**4 ♗a4 d6**
**5 0-0 ♗d7**
**6 d4 ♘f6**
**7 ♗xc6!?**

Strange, but it would appear that this has not been played before in this position. Several times I have made the exchange after a different order of moves: 6 ♖e1, 7 ♗xc6 and 8 d4, but in the tournament at Lublin (1974) the Polish master Pytel answered 7 ♗xc6 with 7...bxc6 and got a reasonable game. Here, however, Black is practically forced into a not especially favourable variation of the Steinitz Defence.

**7 ... ♗xc6**
**8 ♖e1 ♗e7**

Clearly, on 8...♘xe4?? there would follow 9 d5 while on 8...♗xe4 comes 9 ♘c3 (or 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 ♘d2, as in Tal-Kogan, Latvia-'Avantgarde' match 1974) when White has the initiative.

**9 ♘c3 exd4**

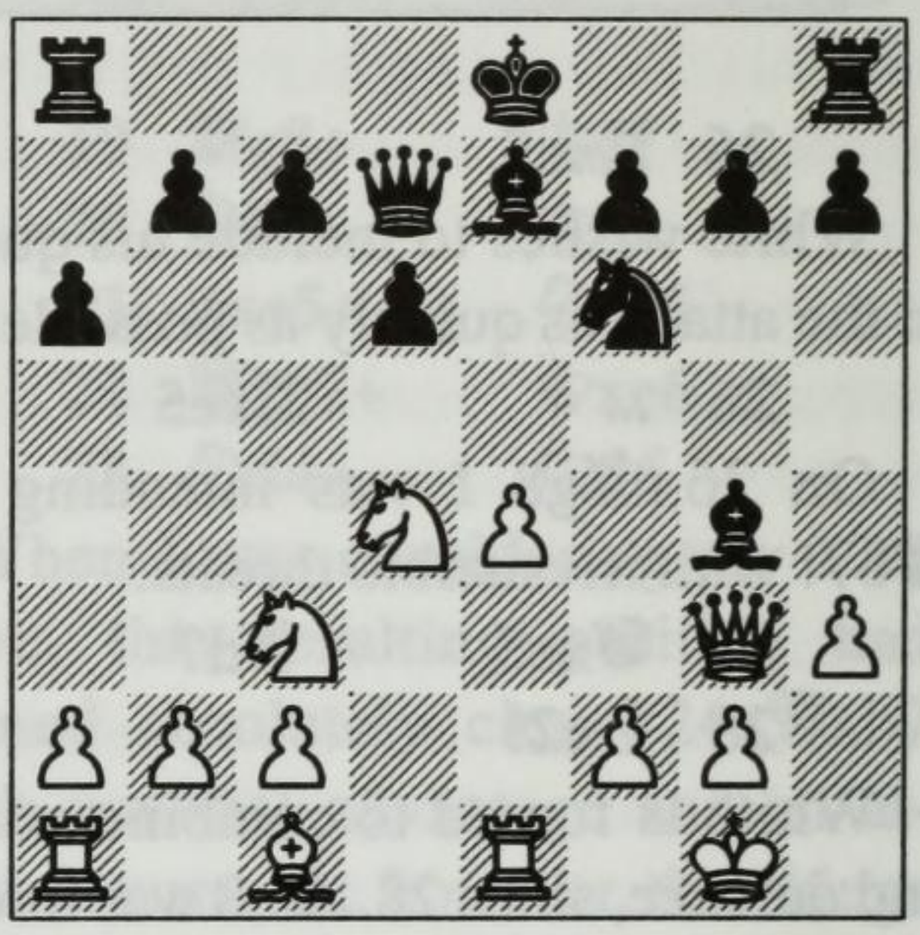
Black is practically forced to surrender the centre, since it has been known for about 80 years now that after 9...0-0 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 ♕xd8 ♖axd8 12 ♘xe5 ♗xe4 13 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♘d3 f5 15 f3 ♗c5+ 16 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 17 ♗g5 Black loses material.

**10 ♘xd4 ♗d7**
**11 ♕f3**

It cannot be said that White is playing originally, but this does not make Black's position any more attractive. All the more since the black pieces are being handled by a player who cannot bear passive defence. Here, instead of the usual 11...0-0 12 ♗f4 ♖e8 with a position which is difficult to breach, Knaak chooses a pseudo-active continuation, which leads to practically insurmountable difficulties.

**11 ... ♗g4**
**12 ♕g3 ♕d7**
**13 h3** *(D)*

*B*



The simplest. After 13...♗e6 White is not forced to go in for the double-edged 14 f4 0-0-0 15 f5 ♗c4 etc. Instead he plays 14 e5! dxe5 15 ♘xe6 fxe6 (15...♕xe6 16 ♖xe5) 16 ♕xe5 and soon wins a pawn. Even so, this line was probably the lesser evil for Black.

**13 ... ♗h5**
**14 ♘f5 0-0-0**

The black king soon finds out that on the queenside, life is also not a bed of roses.

**15 ♗g5**

Black's position is probably already lost. Thus 15...♗g6 fails to 16

♘xe7+ ♕xe7 17 ♘d5 ♕e6 18 ♗xf6 gxf6 19 ♕c3 and 20 ♘xf6. Knaak finds a clever, but nevertheless insufficient, defence.

**15 ... ♘g8**
**16 ♗xe7**

I could also have contented myself with 16 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 17 ♕h4 f6 18 ♕xh5 (or 18 ♗xf6), but I did not want to open in the first case the f-file, and in the second the g-file. I therefore decided to win a pawn in a different way, while setting my opponent a trap. Knaak falls into it.

**16 ... ♘xe7**
**17 ♕g5 ♘xf5**

Capitulation. Relatively better was the pawn sacrifice 17...♘c6! 18 ♕xh5 g6 19 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 20 ♕g4+ ♔b8 21 a3, although even here the path to victory is accompanied by only technical difficulties.

**18 exf5 g6**
**19 g4**

Straightforward and simple. The attempt to complicate the game does not work: 19...gxf5 20 ♕xh5 fxg4 21 hxg4 ♖hg8 22 ♔f1 ♖xg4 23 ♖e7.

**19 ... ♕c6**

Now 20 gxh5 gxf5 leads to great and unnecessary complications, but White has no reason to hurry.

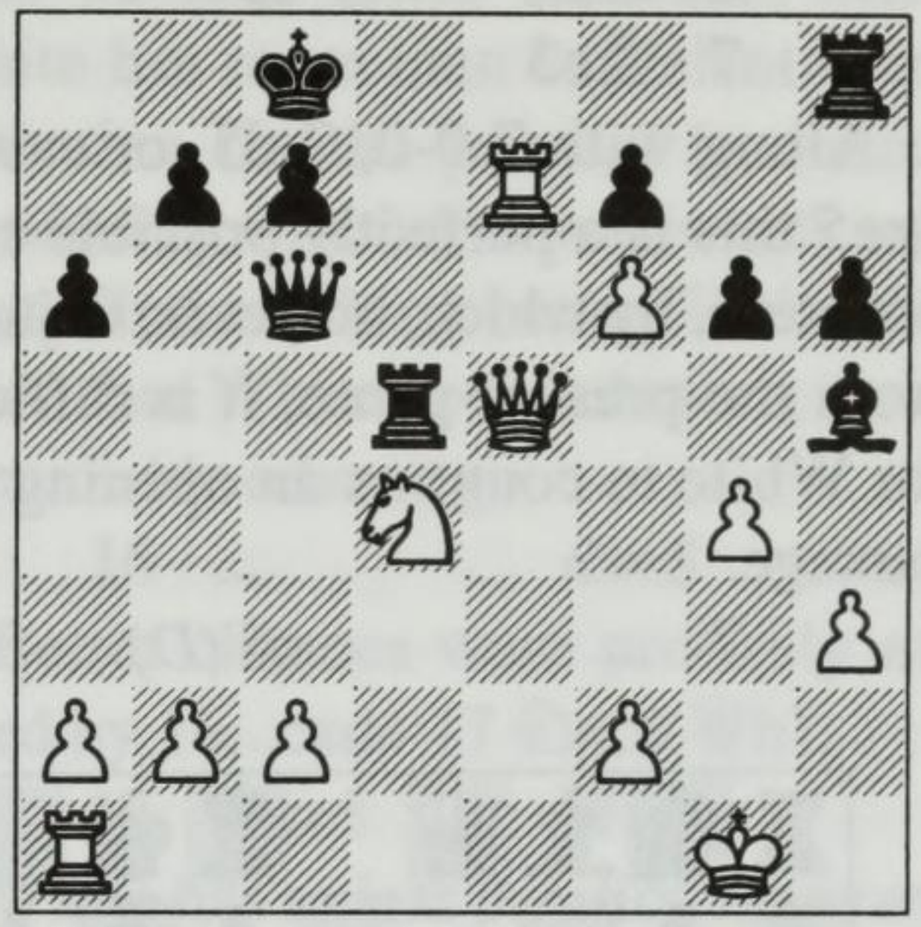
**20 f6**

With the threat of 21 ♘d5.

**20 ... d5**
**21 ♖e7 h6**
**22 ♕e5 d4!?**

A cunning trap 'just before the curtain'. The natural 23 ♘e4 would allow Black to confuse matters by 23...♖d5 24 ♖xc7+ ♔b8!!

**23 ♘e2 ♖d5**
**24 ♘xd4!** *(D)*




**1-0**

Equally unacceptable for Black are 24...♖xe5 25 ♘xc6, and 24...♕c4 25 ♖xc7+ ♕xc7 26 ♕xd5.

Game 99

**Tal – Dvoretsky**

*USSR Championship, Leningrad 1974*

King's Indian Defence

M. Dvoretsky is a player who is hard to beat. Appearing in the Premier League of the USSR Championship for the first time, he lost only one game, although he had a number of difficult positions. In this game, however, he allowed his opponent too much.

**1 d4**

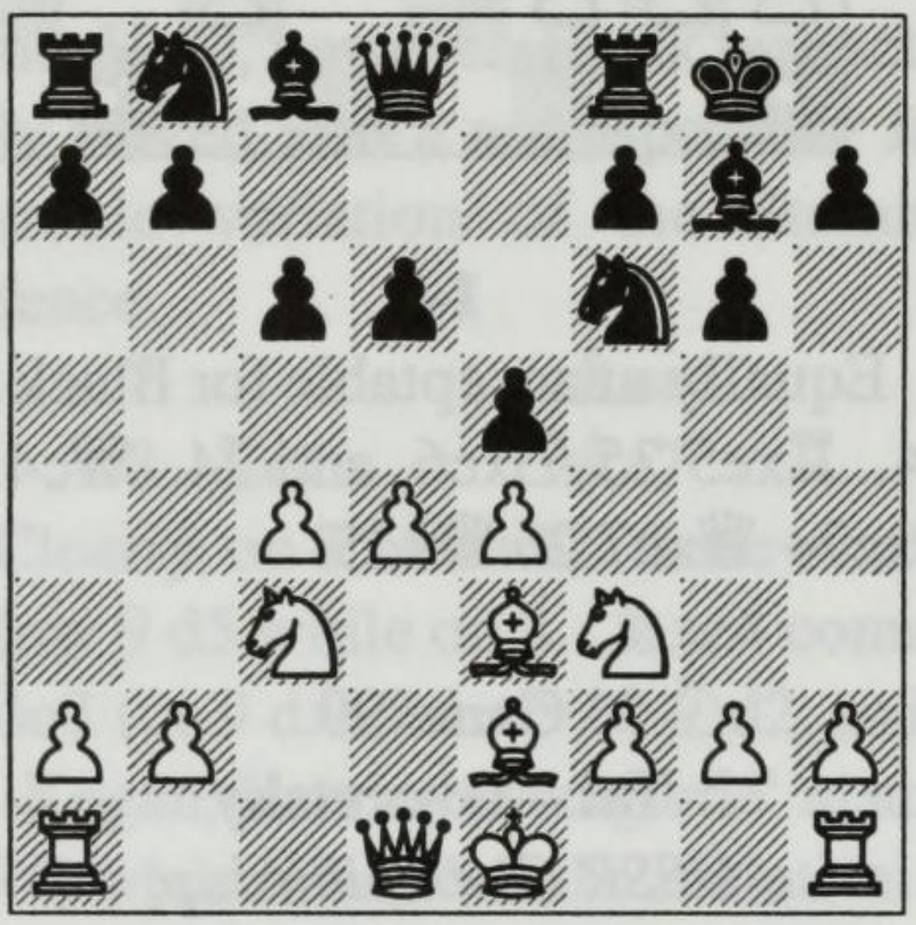
As I have recently come to realise, this is also not a bad move...

**1 ... ♘f6**

**2 c4 g6**
**3 ♘c3 ♗g7**
**4 e4 d6**
**5 ♗e2 0-0**
**6 ♘f3 e5**
**7 ♗e3**

Along with 7 0-0, 7 d5, or even 7 dxe5 this is a perfectly possible continuation, by which, however, to judge from the present game, it is difficult for White to count on an opening advantage.

**7 ... c6** *(D)*



I cannot claim to have had a great deal of experience in playing this variation, but here either 7...♘c6 or 7...♘bd7 has normally been played against me. For a certain time the move 7...♕e7 was also popular. As Dvoretsky admitted after the game, at literally the last minute he glanced through Boleslavsky's book, and noticed that the author recommends the modest pawn move ...c6. For the moment Black refrains from developing his queen's knight. I thought for some time, but could not find anything better than castling. Perhaps 8 d5!? should be played here.

**8 0-0 exd4**
**9 ♗xd4**

I definitely did not like the position after 9 ♘xd4 ♖e8 10 f3 d5 11 cxd5 cxd5 12 ♗b5 ♗d7 or 10 ♗f3 ♘bd7, but capturing with the bishop is also fairly harmless.

**9 ... ♖e8**
**10 ♕c2 ♘bd7**

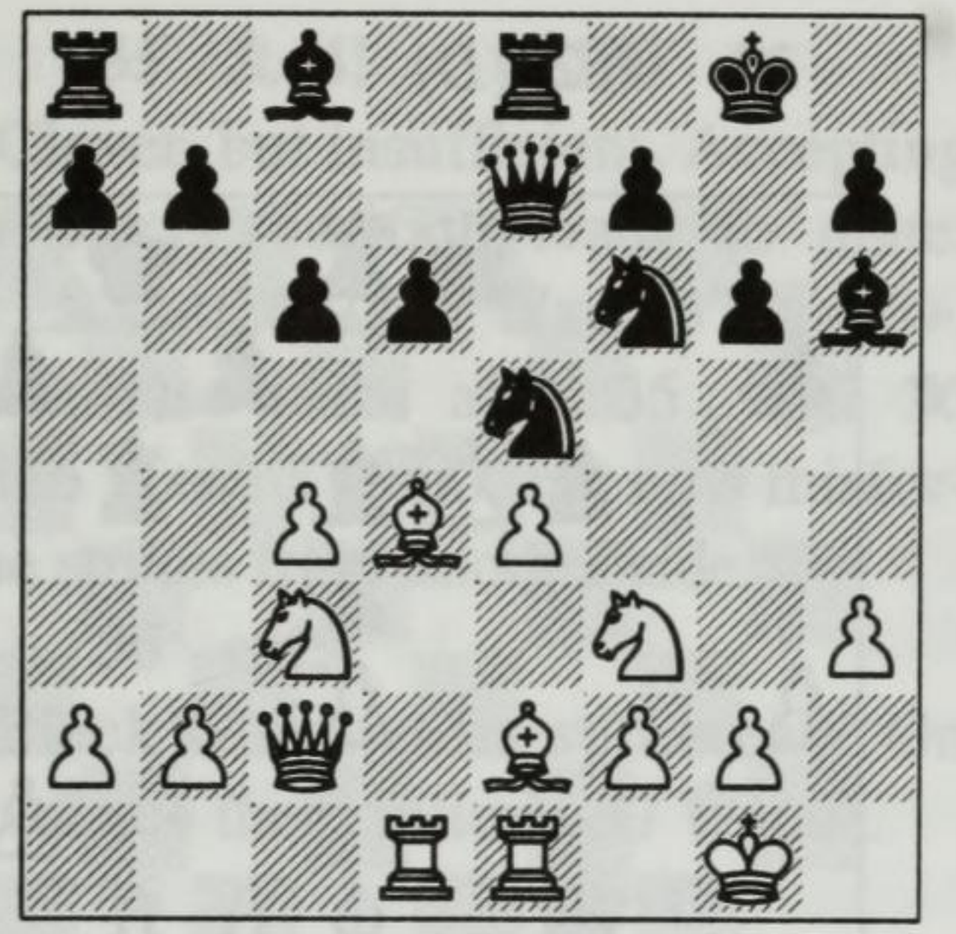
Perhaps Black shouldn't have been in a hurry to make this move. The direct 10...♕e7 11 ♖fe1 c5 deserved attention, when White has to make a choice: either to give up his bishop, or a pawn by 12 ♗e3 ♘xe4 13 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 14 ♕d2 for which he would obtain some compensation.

**11 ♖ad1 ♕e7**
**12 ♖fe1 ♘e5**

In reply to 12...♘c5, which appears more purposeful, I was intending to continue 13 b4 when it turns out that the threat to the e-pawn is illusory: 13...♘cxe4 14 ♗d3 d5 15 cxd5 cxd5 16 ♗xf6! Black could have continued 13...♘e6 14 ♗e3 ♘g4, with a complicated game. After the move in the game White does not at any rate have to worry about his e-pawn.

**13 h3 ♗h6** *(D)*

An interesting move, which in effect forces White to go in for complications, which prove, however, to be in his favour. Against other moves, White would have time to regroup by ♗e3 and ♕d2 with positional pressure.



**14 b4!**

The threat of 14...c5 was rather unpleasant.

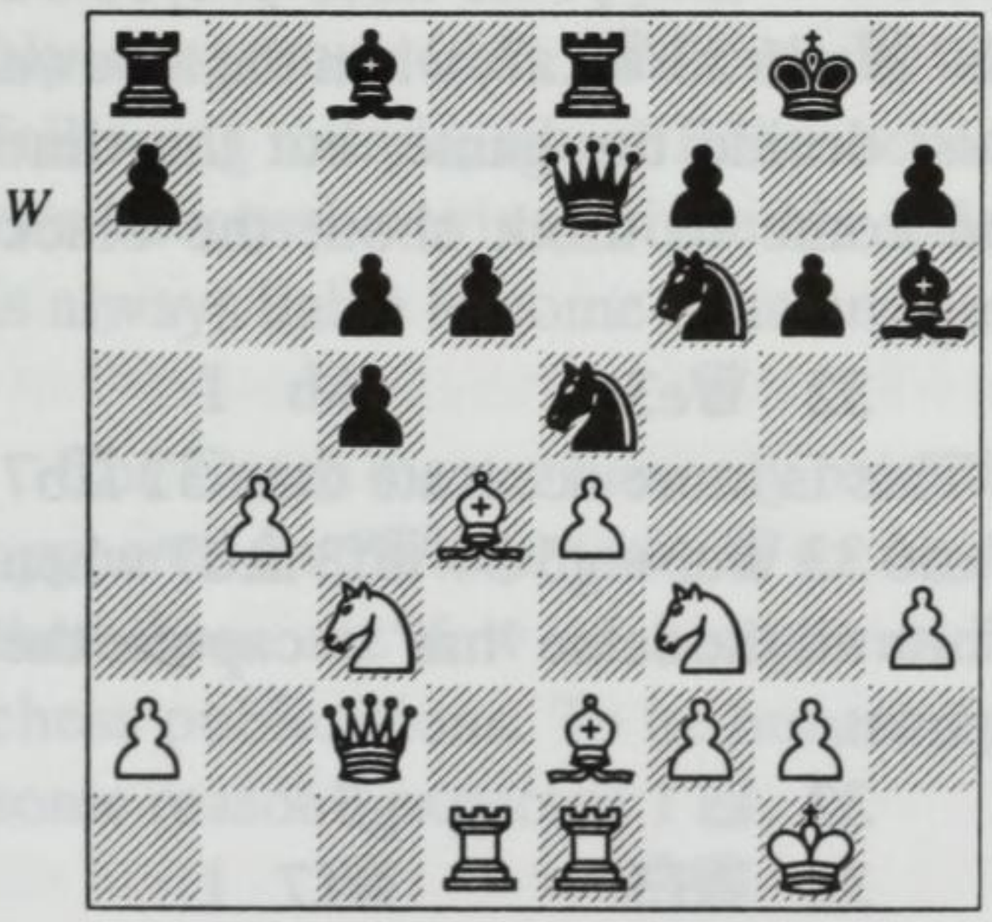
**14 ... b6**

**15 c5!**

As we have already said, this is forced, but quite good.

**15 ... bxc5** *(D)*

After the game a dejected Dvoretsky said that he simply forgot about the transposition of moves which occurred in the game. For my own part, I thought for a long time before making my next move.



**16 ♘xe5**

Since I was quite happy about the main variation (after the preparatory 15...♘xf3+ 16 ♗xf3) 16...bxc5 17 bxc5 dxc5 18 ♗e3 ♗xe3 19 ♖xe3, when White has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn, I hesitated, wondering whether it was worth trying to find anything better. Then I decided that White could obtain a more appreciable advantage.

**16 ... dxe5**

Better chances were probably offered by 16...cxd4 17 ♘xc6 ♕b7.

**17 ♗xc5 ♕b7**

White has a clear positional advantage, but, as we have already said, obtaining an advantage in a game with Dvoretsky is only the start of the battle.

**18 ♘a4**

The knight heads for the blockading square c5.

**18 ... ♗e6**

18...♗f8 was more stubborn. The point is, that after ...

**19 ♗d6 ♘d7**

**20 ♘c5 ♘xc5**

**21 bxc5!**

... a transformation of advantages has taken place: instead of pressure on the weak c-pawn and occupation of the c5-square, White has obtained another, much more important advantage: undisputed (as long as the bishop on d6 is alive) possession of the b-file.

**21 ... ♗f8**

I thought that 21...♕b4 was more active, so as to answer 22 ♖b1 with

22...♕a3. I was intending to play 22 ♗a6 forcing the black queen to guard the b7-square.

The move in the game involves a clever trap. At first I began considering interesting variations of the type 22 ♗xe5 ♗xa2 23 ♗a1 ♕b3 24 ♕d2 ♗xc5 (bad is 24...♖xe4 25 ♗f3 ♖xe1+ 26 ♖xe1 ♗g7 27 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 28 ♖a1!) 25 ♕g5. The variations appeared sufficiently convincing, but I hesitated to open the sluices for the black pieces. I was right: on 22 ♗xe5 Black had prepared 22...♗b3!, not only securing opposite-coloured bishops, but also winning back the pawn!

**22 ♖b1**

Not deviating from the general plan.

**22 ... ♕d7**
**23 ♖ed1**

All White's pieces are directed against the queenside.

**23 ... ♗xd6**
**24 cxd6!**

Yet another transformation. White goes in for a variation, the point of which lies in his quiet 27th move.

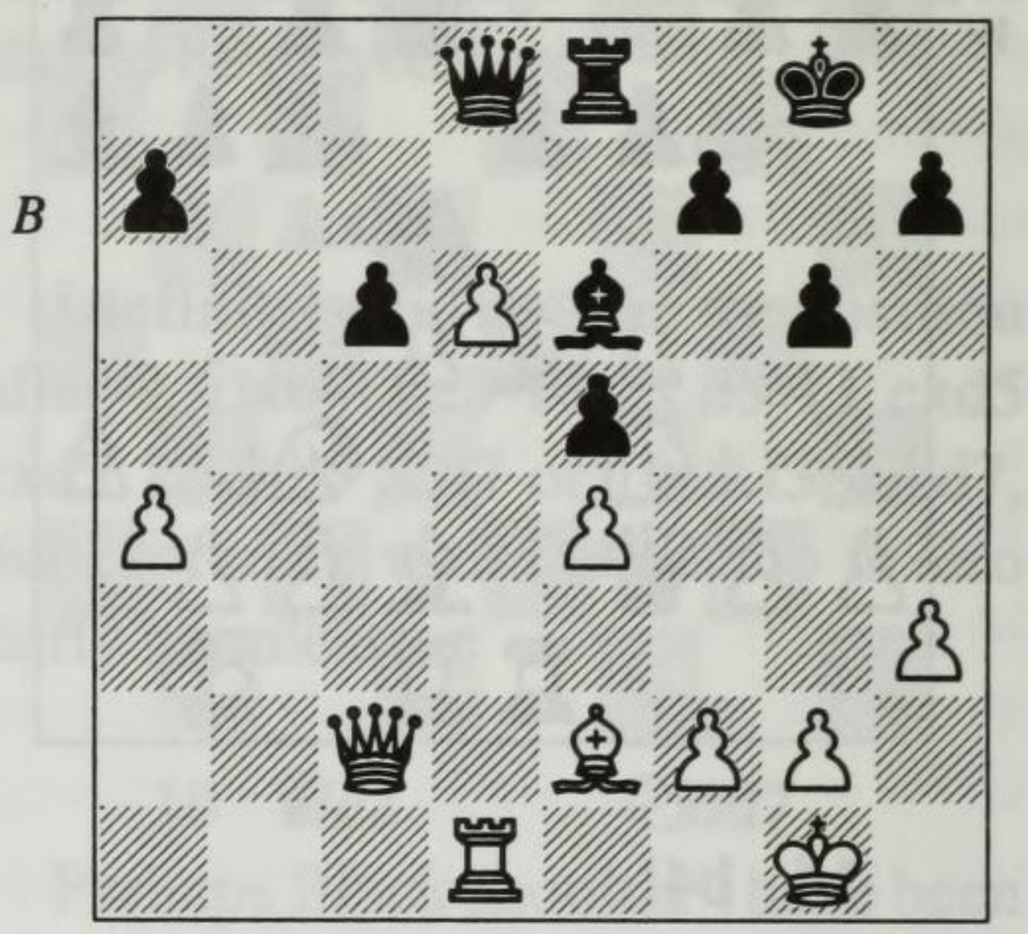
**24 ... ♖ab8**
**25 a4**

A new trump comes into play. The march of this pawn to a6 followed by the intrusion on b7 must decide the issue.

**25 ... ♖xb1**
**26 ♕xb1 ♕d8**

It only remains for Black to play 27...♕b6, and his position will be tenable, but ...

**27 ♕c2!** *(D)*




... and it turns out that on 27...♕b6, 28 ♖b1 is decisive. The black queen is forced to return to her cheerless occupation – that of blockading the pawn on d6.

**27 ... ♕d7**
**28 ♕c5 f6**

28...♗b3 29 ♖b1 ♗xa4 30 ♖a1 and 31 ♖xa7 is clearly bad for Black.

**29 a5 ♔g7**
**30 ♖b1 ♖d8**
**31 a6 ♔h6**

Now White could have played 32 ♖b7 ♕xd6 33 ♕xa7, when the a-pawn must decide the game, but the time had come to think about the black king!

**32 ♕e3+**

This is more accurate than 32 ♖b7 ♕xd6 33 ♕e3+ g5 34 ♕f3 ♗d7 when White all the same 'has' to capture the a-pawn.

**32 ... g5**
**33 ♕f3 ♕f7**
**34 ♖b7 ♖d7**

**35 ♗c4! f5**

Clever, but insufficient. Accepting the piece sacrifice leads to mate: 35...♗xc4 36 ♖xd7 ♕xd7 37 ♕xf6+. Black also loses after 35...♔g7 36 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 37 ♕f5, but now misfortune strikes from another side.

**36 exf5**

Black's c-pawn is still weak! On 36...♗xc4 there follows 37 ♕xc6!.

**36 ... ♕xf5**

**37 ♗xe6 1-0**

Game 100

**Böhm – Tal**

*Alekhine Memorial Tournament, Moscow 1975*

King's Indian Defence

Up till the sixth round, in which this game was played, the two players had made a pretty poor showing. This applies in particular to the Dutch master playing White: his column in the tournament table showed a string of five successive noughts. It has long been known that such an opponent is doubly dangerous (this is shown by the following rounds, where Böhm scored two successive wins), since his series is always liable to come to an end.

**1 d4**

The Dutch master has only recently appeared on the international scene, so that there are few of his games in chess publications. To be honest, for some reason I expected 1 e4.

**1 ... ♘f6**

**2 c4 c5**

**3 d5 g6**

**4 ♘c3 ♗g7**

At this point it is still early for Black to decide whether or not to play ...d6, but after ...

**5 e4 0-0**

**6 ♗d3**

... it became clear that Böhm was aiming for a system which is popular at present, in which Black's position is on the whole not very comfortable, and unpromising as regards playing for a win. This system is characterised by the moves 6...d6 7 h3 e6 8 ♘f3 exd5 9 exd5 ♖e8+ 10 ♗e3.

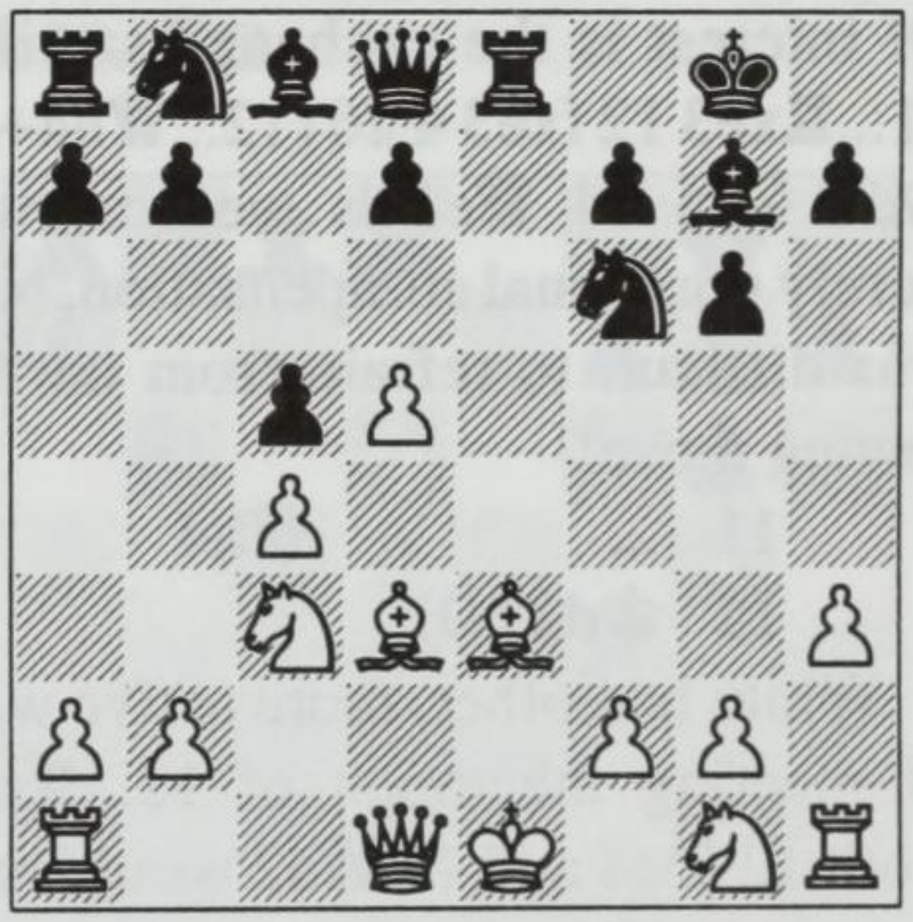
**6 ... e6**

Now the game takes on a certain theoretical interest. White can of course play 7 e5 ♘e8, but this would mean rejecting his intended plan.

**7 h3 exd5**

**8 exd5 ♖e8+**

**9 ♗e3** *(D)*




It is not difficult to see that after 9...d6 10 ♘f3, a position is reached from the system mentioned above, but

Black is by no means bound to hurry with the development of his queenside pieces. True, as the sequel shows, he should not have overdone this.

**9 ... ♘h5**

On 9...♗h6 the natural 10 ♘f3 suggests itself, and, as practice has shown, it is extremely dangerous for Black to capture the pawn.

**10 ♘ge2**

Black's first achievement. White is unable to develop his knight at f3 in view of 10...♘g3!

**10 ... d6**

**11 g4!?**

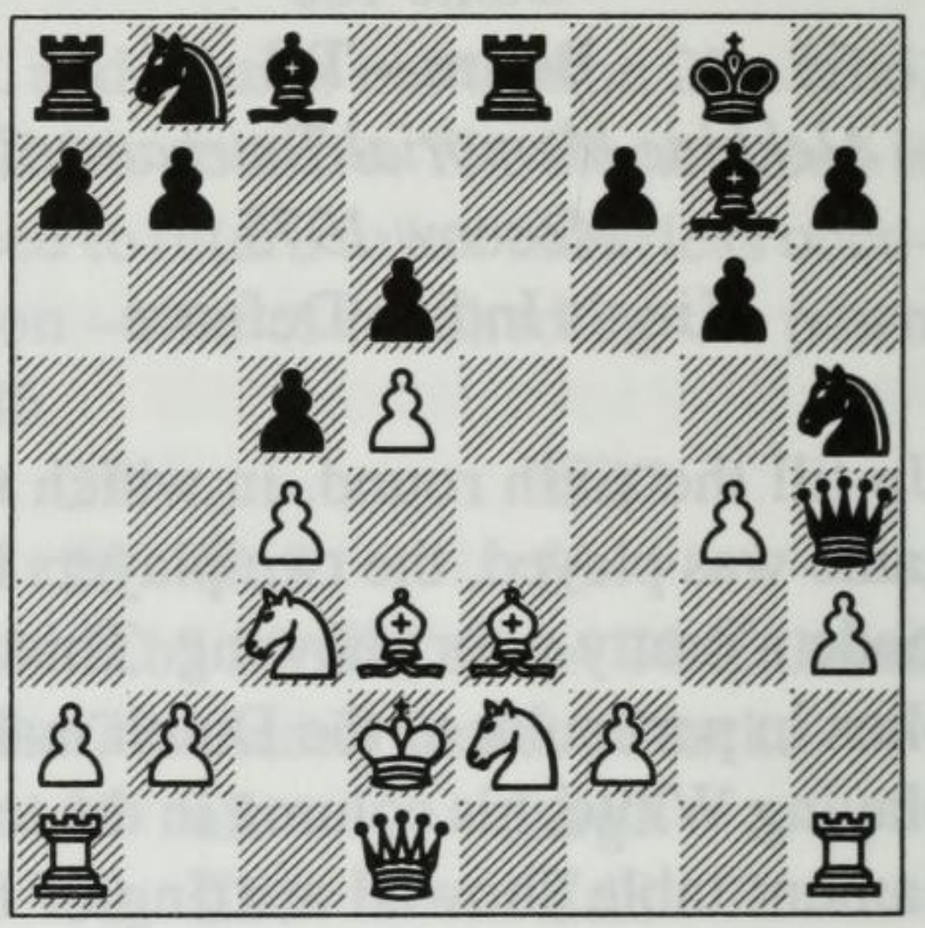
An interesting decision. In reply to 11 0-0 Black would have continued 11...♘d7 followed by 12...♘e5; then the absence of the white knight from f3 would be in his favour. How is he to play after the text? If, for example, 11...♘f6, then 12 ♕d2 ♘bd7 13 f4 leads to a complicated game, in which White's chances appear preferable. Of interest is the exchange sacrifice 11...♖xe3 12 fxe3 ♘f6 (12...♕h4+ 13 ♔d2 ♘f6 14 ♕e1 is weaker) with purely positional compensation, but it was difficult to refrain from the following move!

**11 ... ♕h4**

**12 ♔d2** *(D)*

White had other, more active ways of meeting the threat of 12...♖xe3. Both 12 ♘e4 and 12 ♕d2 would have won material.

In the first case, after 12 ♘e4 ♗xg4 13 ♗g5 ♗xe2 14 ♕xe2 ♕xg5! 15 ♘xg5 ♖xe2+ 16 ♗xe2 ♘f4, Black would have excellent play for the sacrificed exchange, since the bishops are not only of different colour, but also of different strength. Less clear are the consequences of 12 ♕d2, when Black was intending to continue 12...♗xg4 13 ♗g5 ♗xe2 14 ♗xh4 (14 ♘xe2 ♕d4) 14...♗xd3+ 15 ♔d1 ♗xc4. The resulting irrational position is not unfavourable for Black, since his queen's knight comes quickly and effectively into play. The move made by Böhm is without doubt the strongest.



*B*

**12 ... ♘f6**

**13 ♕g1**

Black had reckoned mainly on the move 13 ♘b5, after which the exchange sacrifice 13...♖xe3 would gain significantly in strength. Since White is now threatening a favourable exchange of queens by ♕g3 Black has no choice.

**13 ... ♘fd7**

**14 f4 ♕d8**

15 g5 was threatened.

**15 g5**

White has declared his intentions, and thus the answering reaction is therefore quite natural.

**15 ... b5**

**16 ♘xb5**

I think that 16 cxb5 a6 17 a4 was perhaps stronger. The point is that after ...

**16 ... ♗xb2**

**17 ♖b1**

... instead of the incorrect retreat ...

**17 ... ♗g7**

Black had the opportunity to play 17...♕a5+ (incidentally, I wrote down this move on my scoresheet, but didn't make it on the board) 18 ♘ec3 ♗xc3+ 19 ♘xc3 ♗a6 when it turns out that White cannot defend his c-pawn: 20...♘b6 is threatened, and his queen is tied by the threat of ...♖xe3. After the possible variation 20 h4 ♘b6 21 h5 ♖e7! the position would remain sharp, but Black would have nothing to complain about. The decision to preserve the dark-squared bishop involves not only giving up a pawn (which is significant), but also (and this is very important) a loss of time. In addition, Black had simply overlooked a tactical possibility on move 22.

**18 ♘xd6 ♕a5+**

**19 ♔d1 ♖d8**

If White was now forced to capture on c8, Black's position would be clearly preferable. His pieces would quickly come into play, whereupon the insecure position of the white king would tell: there would be nothing to prevent a black knight from capturing on d5. But ...

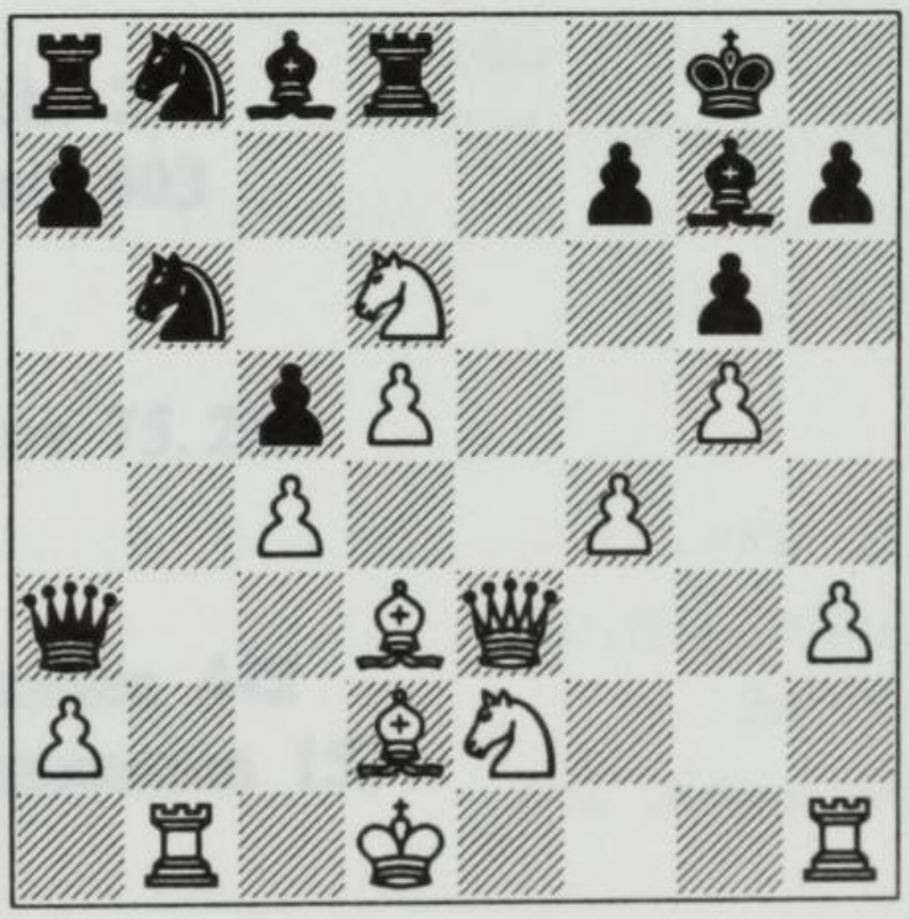
**20 ♗d2! ♕a3**

The alternative 20...♕xa2 21 ♗c3 was not very attractive.

**21 ♕e3**

It was only here that Black noticed that, after the natural move 21...♘b6, which he had planned beforehand, White could gain a great advantage, but it was already too late to turn back.

**21 ... ♘b6** *(D)*



I played this, and froze. After thinking for some 15 minutes, which seemed too long to me, the Dutch master picked up the knight on d6 and ... moved it to the other side. A fairly simple analysis shows that after 22 ♘xf7! Black's position becomes critical. He has to choose between 22...♕a4+ 23 ♗c2 ♕xc2+! (23...♘xc4 24 ♕xc5) 24 ♔xc2 ♗f5+, with only moral compensation for the queen, and the patient 22...♖f8.

**22 ♘b5? ♕a4+**

Now Black is able to effect his plan completely.

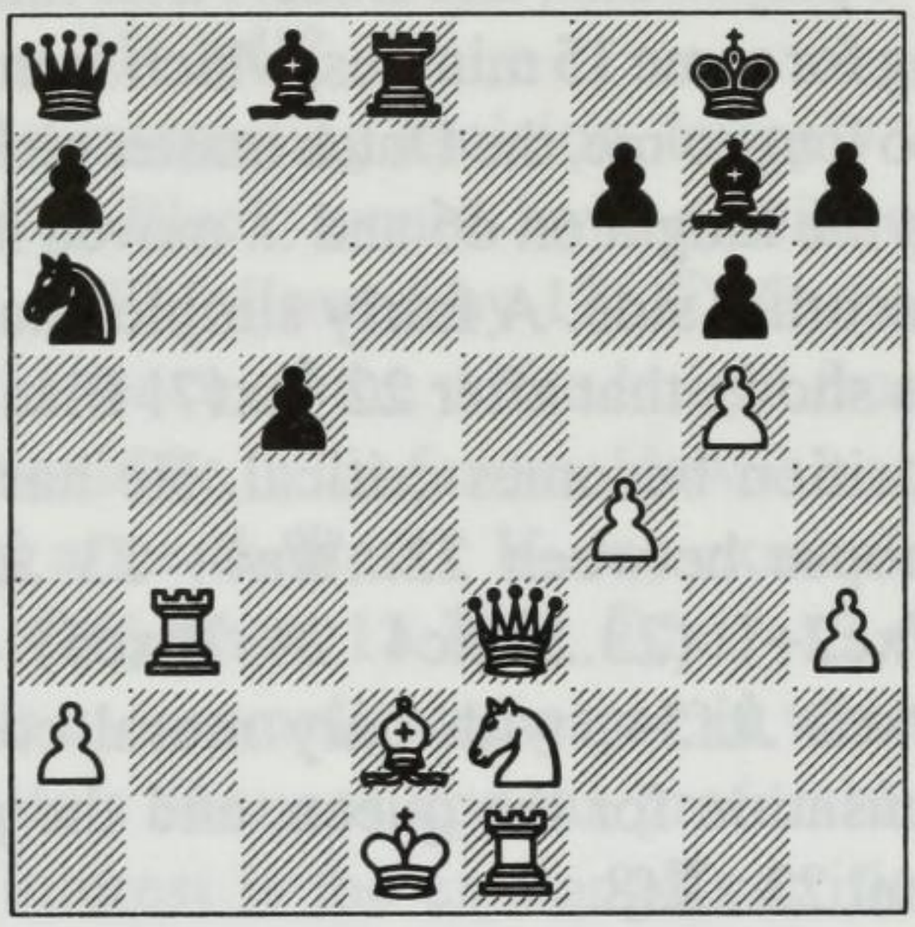
**23 ♖b3 ♘xc4**
**24 ♗xc4**

Perhaps White had been intending 24 ♕e7 and noticed too late the unpleasant rejoinder 24...♘c6!

**24 ... ♕xc4**
**25 ♘c7 ♘a6!**

Better late than never; Black completes his development.

**26 ♘xa8 ♕xd5**
**27 ♖e1 ♕xa8** *(D)*



*W*

A pawn for the exchange, two powerful bishops, and the completely shattered position of the white king; all this together signifies that the outcome of the game is decided. This was the finish:

**28 ♔c1 ♗e6**
**29 ♖a3 ♘b4**
**30 ♗xb4 cxb4**
**31 ♖d3 ♕c8+**

It is now just a matter of taste. Black could also have won by 31...♕c6+ 32 ♔d2 ♗c3+ 33 ♔d1 ♕a4+ 34 ♔c1 ♖xd3 35 ♕xd3 ♗xe1 (there is an interesting false trail here: 35...♗f5 36 ♕d8+ ♔g7 37 ♘d4 ♗b2+ 38 ♔d2!), and the black king succeeds in avoiding the checks.

The way chosen by Black is simpler and more elegant.

**32 ♔d1 b3**
**33 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8+**
**34 ♕d2 ♕c7**
**35 ♘c1 b2**

**0-1**

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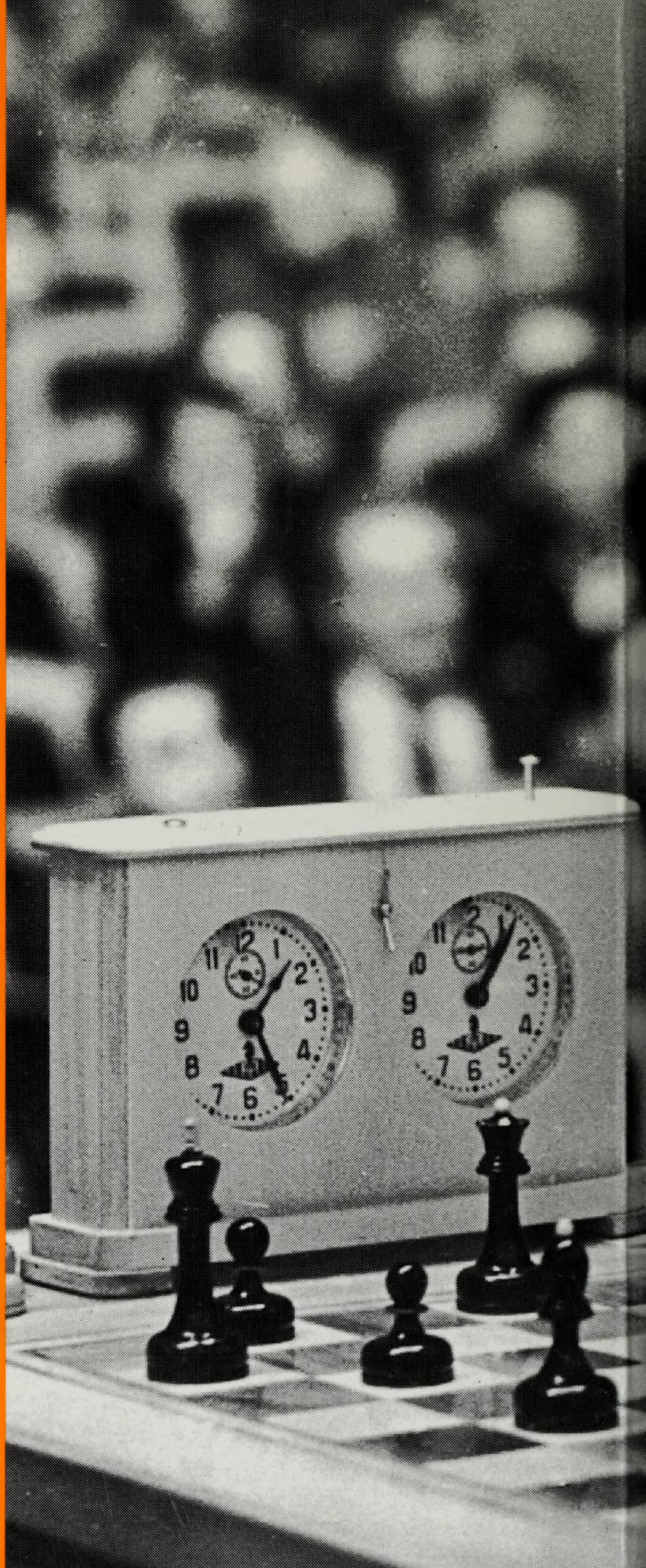
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